

Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian

Life is a Bed of Roses

By Cynthia Brian

“Won’t you come into my garden? I would like my roses to see you.” Richard Sheridan

Poets, philosophers, and politicians praise the potency of the most popular plant in the world as a symbol of beauty, love, politics, and war. These ravishing blooms have been used as celebratory confetti and confections, as legal tender, perfume, cosmetics, decorations, and medicine. Long before man walked the earth, the genus *Rosa* flourished in Oregon and Montana according to fossil evidence dating back 35 million years. The colorful cultivation of the rose began in China 5000 years ago. Boasting 150 species throughout the Northern Hemisphere and thousands of cultivars and hybrids, 35 rose species are native to the United States, including repeat bloomers.

I adore roses. As Clement of Alexander pronounced, “If I give you a rose, you will not doubt of God,” I believe that roses are heaven sent and

heaven scent. These most coveted of flowers add the most magnificence to my garden with the least amount of maintenance. Many new gardeners fear roses, mistakenly thinking that roses are difficult to grow.

It takes no special skill or garden acumen to have roses trapeze on trellises, climb arbors, billow in borders, spill over pergolas, decorate doorways, and magically transform a dining table. Whether roses are trained and coddled in a formal bed, or grow in wild profusion, cottage style, the rose is the queen of any garden plan. Shrub roses and old garden roses are especially popular as gardeners realize that roses are not very demanding, most requiring a minimum of disease control. Roses provide abundance in floral displays, sweet scents, and are winter hardy. They add color, texture, form, and depth to any perennial patch.



The prolific pink petals of a Bonica Shrub rose are perfect for borders and a cottage garden.
Photos Cynthia Brian

To grow healthy, beautiful roses, you need to follow only three steps:

1. Choose the correct plant for your area.
2. Plant the rose in a sunny spot that shines at least six hours of bright light per day.
3. Water appropriately.

Before you run out to buy roses, let me provide a primer on growing roses and the choices you’ll encounter. Depending on where you anticipate planting, factors to consider include flower color, size of the rose bush, growing habits, and disease resistance. For example, you may want a formal rose garden off your living room as I have with specific colors that reflect your interior design. Or you may be creating a cutting garden and want bountiful blooms in a rainbow of colors. The most important thing to remember with growing roses is to provide ample sunshine away from large trees and shrubs competing for sun, nutrients, and water. As in real estate, roses are about location, location, location. Everything else can be augmented or changed.

Choices

Rose choices with personalized characteristics include

- Hybrid Tea
- Floribunda
- Grandiflora
- Tree
- Climber
- Miniature
- Shrub and Landscape

Hybrid teas are tall, long stemmed, and popular for floral bouquets. They are the most popular cutting rose and are used by florists featuring a single specimen.



The classic long stem red rose in a Hybrid Tea is Mr. Lincoln.

Floribundas are versatile roses with clusters of three to fifteen blossoms instead of a single stem.

Grandifloras are repeat bloomers growing to six feet and are a cross between a hybrid and floribunda.

Tree roses are elegant, stately specimens grafted to a long stem from hardy wood stock that is then grafted to the top of a stem on a rose bush.

Climbers produce long canes with numerous flowers that can be trained over archways, along fences, pergolas, trellises, or other sturdy structures.

Miniatures are the smallest rose plant ranging from six inches to two feet, extremely hardy with continuous blooming flowers. They are great for containers, borders, and anywhere space is an issue.

Shrub and landscape roses are the newest favorite of almost every gardener because they require a minimum of care, including little pruning, spread low to the ground like a carpet, are naturally disease resistant, flower consistently throughout the season, and come in all colors, shapes, and sizes.

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