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Roses

HOW TO SELECT AND GROW 380 ROSES,
INCLUDING THE NEW HARDY EVER-BLOOMING VARIETIES

NANCY J. ONDRA



COMPLETELY REVISED AND UPDATED



Taylor's Guide to

Roses

HOW TO SELECT, GROW,
AND ENJOY MORE
THAN 380 ROSES



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Taylor's Guides to Gardening



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Introduction



AN INTRODUCTION TO GROWING ROSES

Few plants offer the romance and allure of roses, so it's little wonder that this group has such an appeal for gardeners. For some of us, it's the charm of a lush garden brimming with beautiful flowers and rich fragrance; for others, it's the luxury of a vase filled with just-picked blooms, or the magic of a single perfect rose. There are as many reasons to grow roses as there are gardeners who enjoy them.

Curiously enough, there are also few plant groups that have such an aura of mystery and difficulty about growing them. Over the years, roses have garnered a reputation for being fussy and disease-prone, and it's true that some can be a real challenge to grow to show-quality perfection. But if all you're interested in is growing great garden roses, there are many wonderful selections that can provide months of landscape interest, in the form of flowers, fruits, fall color, and other special features. Best of all, you can enjoy all of these benefits in return for just general good garden care: thorough soil preparation, mulching, fertilizing, watering, and other routine tasks you do to keep your whole landscape looking its best. Yes, pruning is part of it, but it doesn't have to be the mystery many make it out to be. And yes, spraying might be part of it, too, and this book recommends only organic controls. But careful plant selection can help you grow good roses without relying heavily on sprays.

The biggest mistake you can make with roses is not growing them at all. After that, everything else is secondary!

A Bit of Botany

A big part of the fun of growing roses is reading about them in books and catalogs and talking about them with other gardeners. To that end, it's helpful to learn a little of the lingo so that you can understand what you're reading and you're able to follow along in discussions.

Anatomy of a Rose

The labeled illustrations on page 3 point out many of the important structures on a rose shoot and a rose plant, and they give you the terms commonly used for those parts.

Most roses you buy today are grafted (or, more correctly, budded), which means that buds or shoots of a desired rose are attached to the roots of another rose, called the rootstock, so that they grow together to make one plant. The point at which the two parts join is called the bud union. In most cases, it's easy to see this part, because it's usually slightly swollen. If a knobby area is not visible and you know the rose is grafted, you can assume the bud union is at the point where several main stems (canes) join at the base of the plant.

Canes that are attached above or at the bud union, called the top growth, almost always belong to the desired rose. (Occasionally a plant will produce a "sport" — a shoot with traits that differ from the rest of the plant, such as vigor, habit, or flower color.) Canes that emerge from below the bud union are called suckers; they are outgrowths of the rose used as the rootstock. Left to grow, suckers usually crowd out the desired top growth, so you should remove them as soon as you see them. It's best to snap these off where they emerge from the root, rather than just cut them off at ground level; otherwise, the plant is likely to produce another sucker at that point.

Flower Formalities

You'll also run across jargon rose people use to describe the ways the flowers are put together. Some of these terms refer to the number of petals, while others relate to the physical form of the bloom. Here are the terms for petal counts, as currently defined by the American Rose Society.

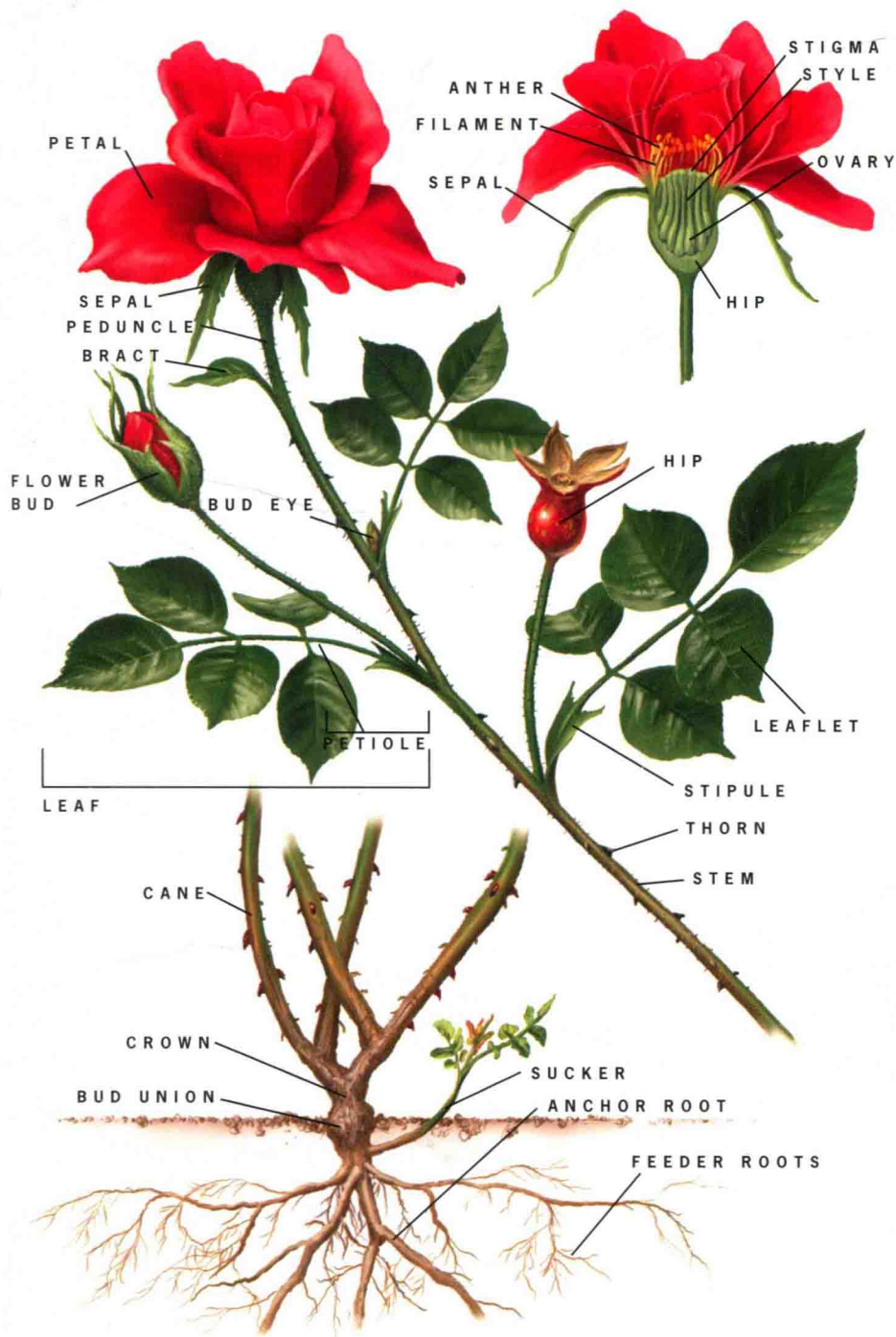
SINGLE: 4 to 11 petals

SEMIDOUBLE: 12 to 16 petals

DOUBLE: 17 to 25 petals

FULL: 26 to 40 petals

VERY FULL: more than 41 petals



Other sources may use slightly different definitions, such as “very double” as shorthand for “full” or “very full.”

Flower form terms generally are self-explanatory, but a few could use some explanation.

CUPPED: The petals have a moderate inward curve, giving the flower a cuplike appearance when viewed from the side.

GLOBULAR: The petals have a strong inward curve, giving the flower a globelike shape when viewed from the side.

HIGH-CENTERED: The inner petals are arranged in a cone that's taller than the outer petals.

POMPON: Many short petals, all of the same length, are arranged to create a domed to rounded appearance when viewed from the side.

REFLEXED: The outer petals curve downward (reflex), giving the flower a ball-like shape when viewed from the side.

ROSETTE: Many short petals are arranged so that they create a flat, low-centered appearance when viewed from the side.

SAUCER-SHAPED: The petals have a slight inward curve, creating a broad, shallow bowl.

A “once-blooming” rose produces all its flowers in one main display, called a flush, each year. This flush usually lasts for several weeks. “Repeat-flowering” roses produce two or more flushes of bloom each year.

The Name of the Rose

Species, or wild, roses generally have two names: a Latin-based scientific (botanical) name with two or more parts — such as *Rosa eglanteria* — and a common name — such as eglantine. When a change occurs naturally in a plant (such as a white-flowering seedling of a normally red-flowered rose), that is called a variety. When a variety results from or is sustained by human intervention, this is correctly called a cultivar (short for *cultivated variety*). A cultivar may be the result of hybridization (when the pollen from one plant is placed on the female reproductive parts of another plant to produce seedlings with genes from both parents), or it may be the result of people actively reproducing a variety by rooting cuttings (sections of stem growth of the desired plant).

Cultivars usually have at least one “fancy” name, such as ‘Rainbow’s End’ or ‘Knock Out’, which is chosen by the breeder or by the company that sells it. (This name is written within single quotation marks.) When a rose is sold in more than one country, it may have more than one fancy name. If the rose is registered with the International Registration Authority for Roses (a function of the American Rose Society), it may also re-

ceive a “code name.” This code name begins with three capital letters that denote the hybridizer or introducer, followed by additional lowercase letters, as in TANorstar. This code name stays the same regardless of where the rose is sold.

All that being said, you’ll see names listed in a number of different ways in books, magazines, and catalogs. In this book, the rose names are primarily treated as they are listed in *Modern Roses XI*, a checklist of over 24,000 roses that is published by the American Rose Society.

In addition to the three types of names just discussed — the scientific (botanical) name; the “fancy” name; and the commercial code name — some roses, especially older varieties, also have common names, which can be thought of as nicknames they have acquired over the years. In this book, you will see all four types of names, though most roses are known by just a few types of names, or just one name. All of the possible names a rose goes by are given to help readers find and recognize specific roses in catalogs and other reference books. Each entry name is the registered or most commonly recognized name for that rose. Then, synonyms (abbreviated “syn.” or “syns.”), or alternate names for that rose, are given. They are listed in a specific order: fancy names; scientific names; common names; and code names. Thus, an entry for a rose with fancy, species, and common names looks like this:

‘Alba Maxima’

Syns. ‘Great Double White’, ‘Maxima’; *Rosa alba maxima*; Jacobite Rose

An entry for a rose with two alternate fancy names and a code name looks like this:

‘Alba Meidiland’

Syns. ‘Alba Meilandécor’, ‘Meidiland Alba’; MEIflopan

Roses by Class

With many thousands of roses available, it’s convenient to group them in various ways. One way is to divide them by their date of introduction.

SPECIES ROSES: These roses have been growing in the wild for hundreds or thousands of years.

OLD GARDEN ROSES: These roses were introduced before 1867, the year when the hybrid tea rose ‘La France’ was introduced.

MODERN ROSES: These roses were introduced in 1867 or afterward.

Within these three divisions, roses are subdivided by their physical characteristics, such as their growth habits, foliage traits, and flower forms. The main subdivisions of old garden roses include the following.

ALBA: Their flowers are generally white or pale pink against gray-green leaves; once-flowering.

BOURBON: The first repeat-flowering roses, they originated on the Indian Ocean island called the Isle of Bourbon, now known as Reunion Island. They are very fragrant.

CENTIFOLIA: Also referred to as “cabbage roses,” these full flowers often have more than 100 petals; once-blooming.

DAMASK: Intensely fragrant flowers that are usually white, pink, or red; some bloom once while others repeat.

HYBRID CHINA: These open plants are rather tender, needing winter protection north of Zone 7. They are usually repeat-flowering.

HYBRID GALLICA: These flowers are usually pink, red, or purple and have intense fragrance. The plants generally have few thorns and are once-flowering.

HYBRID PERPETUAL: These repeat-flowering roses have fragrant flowers that are usually pink or red (sometimes white).

MOSS: Centifolia roses that produce a slightly sticky green or brown mosslike growth on their flower stems and buds; fragrant and mostly once-blooming.

NOISETTE: Large, rather sprawling plants with clustered, fragrant flowers; somewhat cold-tender.

PORTLAND: Very fragrant, usually pink blooms; sometimes called damask perpetuals; repeat-flowering.

TEA: The flowers are in the light yellow, pink, or white range and are borne on canes that have few thorns; are best in Zone 7 and south; repeat-flowering.

The class known as Modern Roses is also divided into a number of subdivisions. Here are some of the main ones (most of which are repeat-flowering).

HYBRID TEA: High-centered, long-stemmed flowers, generally one per stem, bloom on rather upright, narrow plants, usually in flushes every six weeks or so. This is the classic rose used for cut flowers.

FLORIBUNDA: High-centered flowers are produced in clusters, usually with nearly continuous bloom. These plants tend to be hardier than hybrid teas.

GRANDIFLORA: These plants have high-centered flowers held singly or in clusters on rather tall plants; otherwise they are very similar to hybrid teas.

POLYANTHA: Small blooms appear in large clusters on relatively compact, free-flowering plants.

SHRUB: This large group actually contains several classes, including the hybrid kordesii, hybrid moyesii, hybrid musk, hybrid rugosa, and shrub classes. These plants vary widely in height and habit. This also includes the popular group known as English or Austin roses, which were hybridized in England by the rose breeder David Austin.

MINIATURE AND MINI-FLORA: Scaled-down versions of larger modern roses, these plants can range in size from 6 inches to 6 feet tall, though they normally are in the 1- to 2-foot range. Their leaves and flowers are proportionately diminutive. Mini-floras have flowers and leaves that are in between those of miniatures and floribundas in size.

CLIMBERS: This is a mixed group of roses with long, arching canes that need some kind of support. This group includes the climbing hybrid tea, climbing floribunda, climbing grandiflora, hybrid wichurana, large-flowered climber, and climbing miniature classes.



CHOOSING THE RIGHT ROSE

With thousands of roses to choose from, how on earth do you decide which ones to grow? It's easy to be enticed by glossy catalog pictures or by already-flowering plants at your local nursery, and even the most experienced rose growers are occasionally tempted into impulse purchases. But if you want to get the best results for your time and money, it's worth doing some research to discover which roses will best meet your needs and conditions.

It's helpful to start with a list of what you're looking for in a rose. Here are some points to consider.

- What do you want the rose for — a bed or border, a container, an arbor, a hedge, or some other use? Do you plan to cut the flowers for arrangements?
- How much space do you have? If your garden is fairly small, look for compact roses that are in scale with your other plants. Large properties, obviously, can support larger roses.



If you want multiseason interest, look for roses that have attractive leaves or showy fruits as well as beautiful flowers. Red-leaved rose (R. glauca), for instance, offers pink flowers in spring, orange-red hips in fall, and purple-flushed foliage all through the growing season.

- What colors do you like best? Are you looking for bright reds, oranges, golds, or stripes, or do you prefer more pastel shades?
- Is fragrance important to you?
- How much maintenance are you willing to do? Hybrid tea roses, for instance, can require careful attention to disease control and pruning, while many shrub roses can perform respectably with minimal care.
- What growing conditions do you have to offer? Keep in mind the hardiness zone you live in (refer to the USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map on page 460 if you're not sure).

Do Your Homework

Once you have your wish list, it's time to do some research. Books are a great place to start, but you can't beat getting firsthand advice from gardeners who are already growing roses in your area. They can tell you

which roses perform best in your local conditions, and they'll be happy to share invaluable growing tips to get the best out of the roses you choose. If you can't find anyone in your area to talk to, contact the American Rose Society (P.O. Box 30,000, Shreveport, LA 71130; 318-938-5402; www.ars.org) to see if there is a rose group to join in your area. The ARS also has a Consulting Rosarian program, which lists experienced ARS members who are willing to answer rose-related questions. These volunteers are a great source of information on all aspects of rose growing. There are many sources of rose-growing information on the Web, too, including forums where novice and experienced rose growers can post and answer questions. Two super on-line resources are the rose-related forums at Garden-Web (<http://forums.gardenweb.com/forums>) and the roses site at Help-MeFind (www.helpmefind.com/roses).

Seeing roses in person is another way to identify those that would best suit your needs, especially if you're looking for a specific color or fragrance. Rose displays in public gardens are usually labeled, so you can see the names of those that appeal to you. Look for tours of local private gardens, too; they're a great opportunity to see roses used in a home landscape.

You'll often see lists of "best" roses for particular uses, such as the best climbing roses, or the most fragrant roses. These can be helpful as a starting point for your wish list, but don't let them limit you, and don't assume that a rose that's rated highly by one person or group will perform well in your particular conditions.

GRAFTED VERSUS OWN-ROOT ROSES

Once you've decided on the roses you want, you may have a choice of buying grafted or "own-root" plants. Each has advantages and disadvantages.

Grafted plants are top growth of a desired rose attached to the roots of another rose (called the rootstock). This propagation technique enables producers to quickly create a garden-ready plant, and it allows the choice of different rootstocks to suit particular growing conditions. Three of the most commonly used rootstocks in the United States are

- 'Dr. Huey': Tolerates average to dry, alkaline soil.
- 'Fortuniana': Well adapted to hot climates and tolerates nematodes (soil-borne pests); needs regular and generous fertilization and may take an extra year or two to settle in and produce good top growth.

- *Rosa multiflora*: Well adapted to cold climates; tolerates acidic soil and nematodes.

The same top growth grafted onto different rootstocks can perform differently; that's why two roses of the same name purchased from different sources may not grow equally well in your garden. In most cases, you won't know which rootstock a plant is grafted to, but if you want the best results, look for suppliers who can tell you which rootstock they use and whether it is suitable for your area. (Even better, buy from suppliers who use virus-free rootstock to minimize the chance of your rose developing this incurable disease.)

In recent years, a growing number of nurseries have begun offering "own-root" roses: roses propagated by cuttings and allowed to form their



'Dr. Huey' is used as a rootstock for grafted roses in many areas. It often survives long after the original top growth of a grafted rose has died back.