

## Rose Selection and Care

By Susan Price, Master Gardener, Amador County

Few flowering plants deliver quite the showstopping blooms of roses. They can be the most prolific and dependable flowering plants in your garden. With careful selection of plant varieties and management of growing conditions, beautiful roses can be grown with a minimum of pest problems.



*Pink, double "Knockout" landscape rose*

Winter is the perfect time of year to purchase roses. Traditionally, nurseries carry a wide selection of roses in bareroot (dormant) form beginning in late January. These bareroot plants are “packaged” plants with no soil around them. Instead, roots are surrounded by moist wood shavings. While they can be purchased later in spring, they are then sold as potted plants and usually will cost more.

In the last few years, more nurseries are selling their roses in pulp or fiber pots, beginning in winter but extending through spring. Typically, these roses were purchased in bareroot form and then transplanted into pulp pots before selling. This method offers several advantages over traditional bareroot packaging. Since it's now in a container with soil, the roots are less likely to break, or dry out. Plus, there is less urgency as to when you plant your rose out in the garden. If you plant right away, when the rose is still dormant, you can remove the rose from the container and plant as you would a bareroot plant. But, if you purchase the plant later in the season or have not had time to plant in winter, you can plant your rose directly into the ground, pulp pot and all. This avoids placing stress on your now actively growing rose. The pulp pot will naturally degrade over time, but if you cut off the bottom and slit the sides (and trim the top collar down to the soil level), it will speed up the process.



*Hybrid teas and grandifloras*

Whether buying traditional bareroot or in pulp pots, select the best quality plants. Roses are sold by grade: 1, 1 ½ or 2, and priced accordingly, with grade 1 being the best choice. Buy plants that have at least three strong canes and avoid plants that have shriveled, brown or damaged canes. Canes should be plump and green with smooth bark.

Roses will thrive if placed in the proper location, with adequate water and fertilizer. They do best with at least 6 hours of sunlight and plenty of air circulation. Roses in too much shade tend to be lanky and disease prone. They are tolerant of most soils but will be healthiest in rich, well-drained soils with a pH between 6.5-7.0 (slightly acidic). When ready to plant, dig a hole deep enough so that the bud union (graft) is slightly above the soil line and twice as wide as the root system.

Roses need irrigation throughout their growing season. Irrigate deeply enough to moisten the entire root zone and don't irrigate again until approximately half of the moisture has been depleted. Deep watering once a week is usually enough. Twice a week watering may be needed in the hottest months, especially for roses grown in containers.

For young landscape plantings, adding a balanced fertilizer (e.g., 16-16-16) in spring and fall may be desirable, especially if the soil is low in nitrogen. Slow-release fertilizers, like compost, alfalfa/blood meal, bat guano, etc. (or encapsulated materials such as Osmocote) may be preferable. They release nutrients over many months preventing spurts of succulent growth, which attract aphids and diseases. Finally, adding a two- to four-inch layer of organic mulch on top of the soil will keep the feeder roots cool and moist and prevent weeds from getting a foothold.



*Climbing Cecile Bruner rose adorns an arch.*



*"Moser House Shed," an old garden rose*

Choose rose cultivars known for their hardiness and disease resistance. There are literally thousands of varieties to choose from. The American Rose Society lists more than 37,000 registered roses and grades roses on several factors including disease resistance, hardiness, plant habit, bloom, fragrance and vigor. The scale, from 1 to 10, is a great way to narrow your selection. Highly recommended roses, or those receiving scores of 7 or higher, are most likely to perform well in your garden.

There are roughly seven types of modern roses: polyantha, hybrid tea, floribunda, grandiflora, climbing, miniature and landscape/shrub roses. Modern roses were developed by crossing European roses with China and Tea Roses from the Far East. Roses are classified based on lineage and flowering characteristics. Hybrid teas and grandifloras were developed primarily for their large, showy flowers. Because of their profuse blooming and their disease resistance, the cluster-flowered floribundas and polyanthas are more suitable for landscape use than hybrid teas and grandifloras. Climbing roses, either natural climbers or climbing forms of hybrid teas (or other bush roses) have long canes that need a supporting structure like a fence, trellis or arbor. Miniature roses are usually under 18 inches tall and are grown on their own roots. Their small stature makes them good container or border plants.

Landscape or shrub roses are a relatively recent development. The widely popular 'Knockout', 'Carefree' and 'Drift' family of roses are prime examples of roses in this category. These flowering machines bloom from spring until frost and have enhanced disease and insect resistance. They typically require less pruning and deadheading than traditional garden varieties making them a good option for low-maintenance gardens. Landscape roses can be found in

upright, mounding or groundcover forms so there's a landscape rose for almost any situation, whether you need a bushy hedge or a long-blooming slope.

Heritage or old garden roses, generally considered to be roses that were developed before 1867, are the grand dames of the rose world. They are roses grown on their own root stock, making them surprisingly resilient. This large and diverse class of roses includes early European roses as well as the original species of roses found in nature. While they may not bloom as often or as long as modern roses, they make up for it with exceptional vigor, fragrance, dazzling flower displays or showy hips.

Although not as widely available, heritage roses can be found at mail order or online rose nurseries throughout the U.S. A wonderful resource is [www.HelpMeFind.com/Roses](http://www.HelpMeFind.com/Roses), a comprehensive internet site that has detailed descriptions of roses and where to find them. Select roses may be available as seedlings that can be purchased from local heritage rose gardens. The Sacramento Historical Rose Cemetery has a plant sale in April and our own Heritage Rose Garden (HRG) in Jackson is hoping to have limited sales around that time as well. The HRG is also planning to offer open garden days to welcome spring and (hopefully) a profusion of blooms. Further information will be coming once dates and times are finalized.



*Rose in pulp pots sold in spring*

More information about roses and their care is available at a class to be presented by the Master Gardeners of Amador County from 9 a.m. to noon on Saturday, Jan. 25, 2020. The class will be held at the county building at 12200 B Airport Road, Jackson.

The class will include detailed information on planting, irrigation, fertilizing, and integrated pest management, as well as a pruning demonstration. Rose classifications, including modern and old roses, will be covered, along with highlights from the Heritage Rose Garden. Come find out which roses do well in our area and how to make them thrive.

For more information about our public education classes and activities, go to our UCCE Master Gardeners of Amador County website at <http://ucanr.edu/mgamador>. UCCE Master Gardeners of Amador County are available to answer home gardening questions Tuesday through Thursday, 10:00 a.m. to noon, by calling (209) 223-6838. Walk-ins are welcome at our office, located at 12200-B Airport Rd. in Jackson. You can also find us on Facebook.

#### References:

Roses: Cultural Practices and Weed Control, [ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7465.html](http://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7465.html)

Selecting and Planting Bareroot Roses, University of California Cooperative Extension Master Gardeners of Tulare-Kings Co.