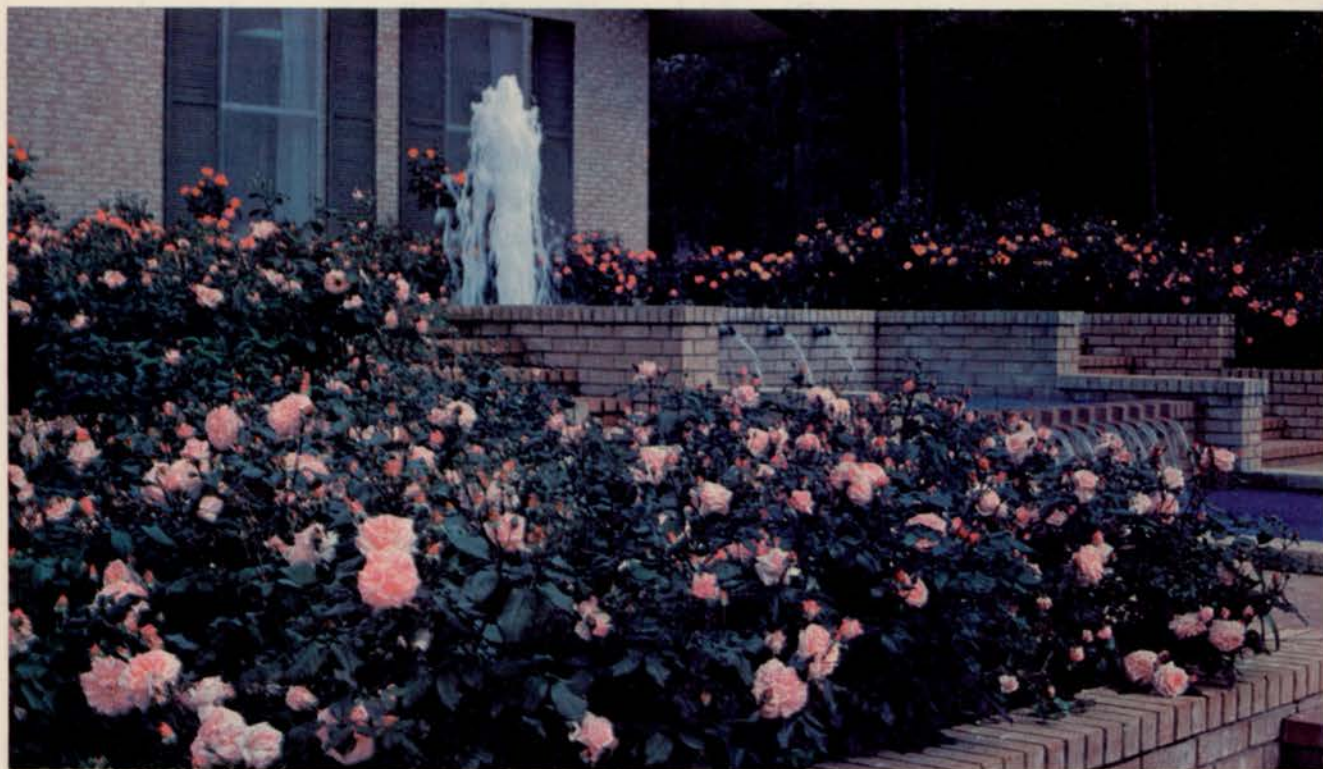


OUT OF INTENSIVE CARE:

THE PLACE FOR ROSES IN THE LANDSCAPE



Rose Parade at the fountain of the American Rose Center, Shreveport, LA.



Hedge of China Doll at Cypress Gardens, FL.

BY ANN REILLY

Roses do not deserve the bad image they often have, because they do not require the intensive care most people think they do. Given a good plant, the right location and a minimum of care, roses will reward you with many months of colorful blooms each season and will be appreciated to their fullest by the people using the facility, be it a golf course, park, recreational area, office complex, or residence.

Shrub and the larger floribunda

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Rose planting at the Toro Co., Minneapolis, MN.

or polyantha roses make excellent hedges and can be used along property lines to hide fences or be "living" fences themselves. "The Fairy" and "Betty Prior" are good variety choices for this use, as is "China Doll", so dramatically used in Cypress Gardens, FL. It grows so thick that no man, child, animal or vehicle could or would want to fight the thorns to get through it. Pruning needs are minimal and can be achieved with hedge clippers if desired.

Lower hedges or borders along paths, entryways, median strips and parking lots can be magnificent when floribundas are the plants of choice. Many of the new varieties are practically sterile; therefore they do not set seed but instead produce more flowers. With the additional color on these varieties comes the phenomenon of clean petal drop and rapid regrowth. What this means is very little removal of dead flowers and therefore less maintenance. Try the varieties "Trumpeter", "Accent", "First Edition" or "Sunsprite". "Simplicity" (or its lookalike "Carefree Beauty") is another excellent shrubby rose variety and was the chosen variety to brighten the sides of the driveway into the Fair Grounds in Corvallis, OR.

When pruning roses in spring for maximum visual effect, prune away all but four of the strongest canes and cut them to 24 inches. Lower pruning will result in larger but fewer flowers.

Climbing the fence

Split rail, chain link or other types of fences that surround the entire property or areas within the grounds are ideal sites for climbing roses, especially the newer varieties such as "America" or "Tempo" that will bloom continually to provide constant color. With rare exceptions, climbers are very hardy and can be ignored during the winter except to make sure the canes are tied to the fence to prevent wind damage. In addition to their beauty and masking qualities, climbers have the advantage of warding off fence sitters and intruders through or over the fence. Jack McCarthy at Old Westbury Country Club on Long Island recently installed several dozen climbers for this purpose and is planning on adding more.

Climbers are not high maintenance roses despite their large size. Pruning mainly involves the removal of dead wood and keeping the plant within size boundaries. Jim Kirk, who maintains 7,000

plants at Rose Hills Memorial Garden in Whittier, CA, controls the growth of the canes at 10 feet by arching them around and down at a 45-degree angle. This, he finds, stops the canes from growing and also produces more bloom, easing the maintenance chore and enhancing the attractiveness of the grounds.

To maintain the climbers on 2½-miles of fence, Jim subcontracts to one man for 10-12 hours every 4 to 6 weeks. The other 7,000 plants are completely tended by two full time men. Once planted, a 100-rose planting should take about 1¼-man hours per week.

Beds of roses

The traditional "rose bed" still has its place around a club house, administration building, flag pole or similar site. It can be styled in either a formal or informal fashion to fit in with its surroundings and can be as large or as small as you desire. Consider the vista from the driveway, offices and other focal points when designing the layout. When planning this type of planting, it is best to stick with one or at the most two varieties for mass color effect. This is not the place for a patchwork quilt. When choosing varieties to plant in pairs, select types with compatible colors and growth habits. Good combinations are "Europeana" and "Iceberg" (red and white); "Sunsprite" and "Accent" (yellow and red); "Garden Party" and "Electron" (white and hot pink); or "Fragrant Cloud" and "Saratoga" (orange and white).

Planting distance apart is important when designing beds or hedges; a good rule of thumb for beds is 2-feet for standard size rose bushes and 6 inches to 1-foot apart for miniatures in temperate climates. For dense hedges, tighten the distance up a little; add another six to twelve inches for frost-free areas. This planting distance not only allows the plants to grow to their full size potential, it also shades the ground sufficiently to keep it cool, moist and weed free.

Weed control

These last three desirable characteristics are also achieved with

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a good 2 to 3-inch mulch which can be of almost any organic material, pure sphagnum peat moss being the most obvious exception. If redwood is available, it is about the best mulch as it practically repels insects; cedar is also good. Other good and easily accessible mulches are shredded oak leaves or chopped evergreen branches that may be available from your own prunings. With the combination of a deep mulch and a pre-emergent herbicide such as Dacthal (if you can find it this year), Ronstar-G or Betasan, weeds can all but be eliminated in the planting bed, making life and rose growing easier.

Where space is limited or low plantings are desired, miniature roses are an answer. If you normally set out bedding plants, try minis instead. They'll give you more months of bloom each year along with eliminating the need to use your maintenance crew to replant marigolds or petunias every year. Miniatures require little attention. They can be pruned with hedge shears to 3-6 inches in early spring and can be trimmed back 6-8 inches in summer if they need it. Where dichondra can be grown, add it as a ground cover under minis and you'll have no problems with mites.

The popularity of container plantings continues to rise and roses make a good choice here. The World Trade Center in New York City has used container roses in its seasonal displays. Select a floribunda or miniature for largest flowering effect and be extra careful to prune as symmetrically as possible. Use a peat-lite planting media for best growth and be aware that the rose planted in the container will need more water than the same plant in the ground.

Care tips

Although roses can be grown under less than ideal conditions if attention is high, to keep your maintenance to a minimum provide them with the ideal of at least six hours of sun a day and a well drained, improved soil with a pH in the range of 6.0-7.0.

Watering can be done as needed by a manual method or tied into the

automatic irrigation system. Harold Goldstein, Director of the American Rose Center in Shreveport, LA, prefers drip irrigation under the mulch as it uses less water and fertilizer can be added as watering is carried out. On the opposite extreme, Jim Kirk at Rose Hills waters as needed with overhead sprinklers set at 36" high between the plants. Watering frequency depends on the heat and is somewhere between twice a week and once every two weeks. He feels the overhead watering is an advantage to keep the plants clean of smog residue, which aids growth and reduces disease. If you follow overhead watering, do it in the morning if possible to further reduce the chances of spreading disease.

Most people turn up their noses at roses because of the stories of insect and disease problems that plague them, yet the men who tend to them on their grounds do not report problems provided a few basics are followed: 1) plant in at least six hours of full sun; 2) select a site where there is good air circulation; 3) prune to keep the center of the plant open; and 4) spray as necessary.

The major insect pest of roses, the Japanese beetle, is no problem where grubs are properly controlled. Aphids are easily controlled with a number of chemicals and spider mites with Kelthane or Plictran. Mildew responds to Tersan 1991 and blackspot to Thiram or Captan. West of the Rockies, blackspot is rarely a problem. Most grounds managers seem to spray the roses when they're spraying the surrounding turf as long as the material is safe and useful, and not make a big thing of spraying. As an added incentive to planting roses, disease resistance is on the increase in new rose varieties.

Wintering the cold

Another headache can be winter kill, yet The Toro Co. in Minneapolis and the Bayview Country Club in Toronto, both certainly in two of our colder spots, report no loss over the winter as long as a simple protection method is used. Both pile up mulching material around the roses in winter, and evergreen boughs are added to this in Minnesota. In

spring the mulch is not removed but instead spread over the bed as summer mulch. If you are located in a frosty area, stay away from most yellows, whites, and pale pinks as they tend to be more prone to cold damage. In other words, stick to red and dark orange roses.

Fertilizing is something that unfortunately can't be done when the turf is being fertilized, as the high nitrogen is the turf fertilizer will cause the roses to bloom poorly or not at all. Instead, use a balanced 5-10-5, 5-10-10, 7-7-7 or similar formulation spread on top of the mulch and watered in. Do this anywhere from once a season to once a month depending on your available time. The more, the better.

Except for minis and the self-cleaning floribundas spoken of earlier, roses should have the spent blooms removed as soon as possible to encourage them to re-bloom quickly. Instead of waiting for the blooms to fade, why not cut them at their peak and use them in the office, lobby or clubhouse? Having roses to cut for this purpose is one reason why James Wylie at the Bayview Country Club in Toronto grows the "Queen of Flowers".

What's the bottom line here? Are roses more work? The question must include "as compared to what?" Compared to no ornamentals at all, surely they're more work. Compared to other ornamentals, they are slightly more work, but isn't maintaining a perfect bent-grass green, a tough athletic field or a velvet lawn more work? And isn't it worth it?

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