



by Cynthia Egger

It's December, hardly the time to think about your garden. However, it's the best time if you're thinking about having your garden or pots bursting with an array of beautiful roses throughout the summer. Most roses bloom 3-4 times between June and November providing color for five to six months.

Let's get rid of the fallacies that roses are too hard to grow, always get diseases, take a lot of care, and always need pruning. Roses are one of the most rewarding plants you can grow, giving you beautiful color in your yard while still bearing enough flowers to cut for inside. All you have to do is plant them correctly, fertilize every 4-6 weeks depending on fertilizer, and prune lightly and correctly when cutting flowers for the house or cleaning up the plant. Later, do one major pruning in mid to late January.

To get started, you need to purchase a good Rose plant. If you are buying bare root, get a Grade 1 Rose. These are not sold at the discount or large chain stores. To be top grade, they must have 3 main canes (you may have the nursery person prune one for you at time of purchase). It's best to have a caliper of 5/8 inches and 2 years in age.

Once you have a good rose stock, find a nice spot to plant it in: a roughly neutral soil, good drainage, and full sun or a good half day of strong filtered sun. Many roses adapt to not-so-perfect conditions. Don't give up before you start. Find the rose-lover employee at the nursery to tell you which roses do best in your conditions.

Once you buy the healthy rose and it's pruned to 3-4 healthy stocks, you're ready to plant. There are many ways to plant a rose. It's a good idea to make a small mound with good soil mix, pack it firmly with your hands, and sprinkle bone meal on it before putting the roots on top of it. As you complete the planting, finish adding the soil and fertilizer and packing the soil. The bone meal stimulates root development, and you can't have a healthy and productive rose without a strong root system to support the roses.

Label your roses! Roses come with their name on a metal tab attached to the plant by a fine wire. Do not take it off. If you do, two years from now, you won't be able to remember the name of the most beautiful rose you ever saw.

New roses are released every year, and a rose of the year is selected annually. Don't be afraid to try new roses, they are fairly easy to grow and can also be grown in pots, but the pots have to be big enough for the plant to thrive. You may need to fertilize more often but only as directed on your fertilizer.

This year, the Hybrid Tea Rose of the Year is "Sundance." It has deep golden buds bursting into fully opened, sun-like flowers rimmed in a vivid orange pink. Floribunda Rose of the Year is "Honey Perfume." It has plush apricot-yellow flowers with a spicy fragrance.

Following is a list of other roses arriving at nurseries at the end of December (great gifts for those who love their gardens):

**Fragrant Keepsake** - a hybrid tea with a strong damask scent and yellow petals edged with pink.

**Day Breaker** - a floribunda with petite clusters of perfectly formed yellow-apricot-pink spiraled buds that swirl open into warm yellow tones blending from apricot to pink.

**Memorial Day** - a hybrid tea, which does well in a very hot spot, that is lavender pink with a strong damask fragrance.

**Disneyland Rose** - a floribunda that sets wave after wave of incredibly vivid, multi-toned flowers in shades of copper, apricot, orange, and pink and has a light spicy fragrance.

**Heaven on Earth** - a floribunda that has a fragrance, color, and flower form like no other with luscious shades of

apricot and an irresistible spicy perfume.

**Nancy Reagan** - a hybrid tea with a light, sweet perfume and graceful blossoms that progress from light apricot to a more intense shade, illuminating the landscape with elegance all summer long.

**Ronald Reagan** - a hybrid tea with whitish pink buds edged in red hints of the luminous reverse within, unfolding into huge flowers that transform from light red to dark pink—in contrast to the crisp white reverse and a light sweet scent.

**Wildfire** - a hybrid tea with perfect, bright yellow buds edged in an orange swirl and opening to classically formed, brilliant orange flowers with a light yellow reverse and a soft musky fragrance.

**Lavender Lace** - a floribunda that is a non-stop bloomer, setting large clusters of silvery lavender blooms with a powerful citrus scent.

My favorite rose overall is "Double Delight" a hybrid tea that buds up white with a red edge and opens into a beautiful large white flower with a cherry pink edge and a luscious fragrance. Double Delight blooms 4-5 times in a season and is a hardy and healthy plant.

It's hard to have just one rose because of all the beautiful options to choose from. But for the great reward you'll receive in your garden, a variety of roses are well worth the little work it takes.     :::

