



Let's hear it for ROSES

Roses are hard to beat for sheer exuberance of flowers and fragrance, says *Teena Crawford* – so take time out to savour and grow these glorious blooms.

Native to most continents in the northern hemisphere (yet none in the south), the incredibly tough and versatile rose is now grown in ornamental gardens worldwide.

There is a rose for almost every garden situation, from the traditional floribunda or hybrid tea roses for garden beds, to the climbers and ramblers which are great for covering fences, pergolas and that unsightly old garden shed.

I am always amazed at their versatility, whether it's a hedge of *Rugosa* roses in the coastal town of Eden, New South Wales, or the elaborate formal rose garden and streetscapes of Victorian country town Benalla.

Roses have simple needs. They perform best in at least five to six hours of direct sun per day. If grown in too much shade, they tend to be sparse and leggy, and will generally suffer from more pests and diseases. Soil type is not important but it

must drain well. To improve drainage, soil structure and nutrient retention, incorporate some gypsum and/or commercial or homemade compost into your soil.

There is a rose
for almost every
garden situation.

Potted roses can be planted year round because they already have an established root system. Water your potted rose before planting. Dig a hole twice the width and depth of the root ball and place some slow release fertiliser and water storing granules in the bottom, incorporating some into the 'backfill' soil, too. Tease the roots a little and plant with the top of the root ball just below the top of the garden bed. Backfill the hole, water well and apply a layer of mulch.

Bare-rooted roses are available during the winter months and are a cost-effective way to buy. They are particularly convenient for gardeners who live in remote areas (they are mailed all over Australia). When your bagged, bare-rooted roses arrive, remove the packaging and immerse them in a bucket of water for 30 minutes to re-hydrate. Dig a hole approximately 500 x 500 x 300mm deep; plant your roses to a depth of halfway up the main trunk. Water in well, then water fortnightly if you do not receive winter rainfall. Fertilising is best done in mid-spring, when the root system has had time to get established.

Established roses also benefit from an annual dressing of complete fertiliser. Maintain a good layer of organic mulch around them to help retain water and suppress weeds; this mulch breaks down over time, providing additional nutrients to your plants.

Q Which roses should I grow?

A Growing roses is easy, but deciding exactly which of the seemingly endless varieties to grow can be very hard!

Floribunda (meaning abundance of flowers) roses are bushy plants ideal to use as pot specimens, hedges, borders or individuals amongst other garden plants. They are the most prolific flowerers, producing up to 40 flowers per stem. 'Iceberg' is the most widely known and planted floribunda rose; available both as a bush and a climber, it rewards the gardener with an almost continuous display of masses of softly perfumed white blooms.

Hybrid tea roses are excellent for picking, with their long, elegant stems, large blooms and frequently strong fragrance. A group planting of varieties such as 'Just Joey' provides picking flowers throughout the season – or a wonderful sight in the garden.

English-based David Austin Roses has produced a range of roses for Australian gardens. These combine perfume, variety and the charm of old-world roses with the recurrent flowering qualities of modern roses.

For the non-gardener, 'landscape roses' such as the Flower Carpet range are an excellent choice. These are low-growing floribunda roses producing a massed floral display over many months.

A recent exciting development in roses in Australia has been the release by famous French plant breeders the Delbard family of a number of collections. Quite different from traditional types, they include Grand Parfum, Climbing, Border & Terrace and Painter's Collection.


The Grand Parfum Collection includes romantically-named varieties such as 'Souvenir de Louis Amade' and 'Mitsouko', the latter a lemon and pastel pink, fragrant rose, named in honour of a Japanese princess and sharing its name with a fragrance from French perfumer Guerlain.

For me, the Painter's Collection is the most inspiring. Its blooms are 'brush-stroked' with colour: no two flowers or petals have the same markings, yet the colours meld beautifully to provide a uniquely spectacular display. As the name suggests, varieties remember famous artists, including Henri Matisse. His namesake (pictured left) is a floriferous rose with large flowers of raspberry and rose pink, while 'Maurice Utrillo' has clusters of double flowers in reds, yellow and white.

Traditionally, the art of rose pruning was considered highly complex and technical, but simple pruning techniques cater well for our modern roses (but not old world roses such as non-repeating and species types). During summer, after each flowering, prune off about one-third of the growth (half for standard roses) to form a neat, rounded bush. Use the garden shears for speed and convenience. In six to eight weeks you will be rewarded with another mass of flowers.

In winter, use shears and/or secateurs to prune your roses back by half to a rounded shape. Remove any dead branches or growth smaller than pencil thickness. From time-to-time, if plants become very woody, any thick, old branches can be removed with a pruning saw to encourage the production of fresh, new water shoots in the coming spring.

After pruning in the winter, spray your roses with Winter Oil to clean up any remnant pests such as mites or scale. An application of fungicide at this time is also beneficial to kill off any fungal remains.

Roses have been standout performers during Australia's prolonged dry weather. They flower from mid-spring and until winter arrives, are not hard to grow, and yield great rewards. Plant a few in your garden. 

→ MORE

Tempt yourself – and find lots of good advice – by visiting these websites.

Rankins Roses
www.rankinsdirect.com.au

Swane's Nurseries
www.swanes.com.au

Treloar Roses
www.treloarroses.com.au



PHOTO: COURTESY FRANKIN ROSES