

Old Garden Roses

Old Garden Roses are some of the most beautiful and fragrant of all roses. Many Old Garden Roses have contributed their genes to the breeding program that has produced the English Roses. In spite of the notion by some that OGR's and English Roses need no spray or fertilizer and little other care, only a very few will survive that Spartan existence. The ones that do are the ones you hear about; the others are long gone.

Own Root v. Grafted Roses Old Garden Roses are sold as own root roses and as budded or grafted plants. There are advantages to both - A plant on its own roots will be stronger and not sucker, but the grafted plant will reach mature size sooner. Own root plants will perform better in poor soils and poorer growing conditions, will give more bloom, and bloom more continuously. Some growers feel the best solution is to buy a grafted plant and to plant the bud union several inches below soil level so that it will eventually go on its own roots.

Buy Plants For Mature Size Many books and catalogs that describe Old Garden Roses give a range for the mature size. In Middle Tennessee, you can estimate that the mature size will be at the highest end of the range or larger, so be sure to give them plenty of room. It's hard to imagine that a small 6" cutting will grow to be 6' tall and 5' wide, but with patience and good care, it will.

Select roses that are rated for Zone 6 or colder. Plant where they will receive at least six hours of sun in a location away from large trees or shrubs that will compete with them for nutrients. The most important thing you can do to get your new rose off to a good start is to plant it properly in a large hole. Dig the hole approximately 18" deep and wide. Mix the removed soil with 1 cup of bone meal, a shovel of mushroom compost (composted horse manure) and equal parts of peat moss and sand. Place a mound of this mix in the bottom of the hole, spread the roots over the mound, and fill the hole with half the remaining mix. Water well - let it drain, then add the rest of the planting mix. Water again, and mulch to cover the canes so they won't dry out.

Everyone wants a plant that will bloom "all the time". At best, the plant will give a massive spring display with blooms coming here and there throughout the season. Some roses will give several "flushes" followed by one or two blooms. Catalogs use various terms to describe the bloom production of individual plants. The terms recurrent, remontant, or repeat bloom all mean ANY bloom after the spring flush. That could be as little as one or two blooms. Continuous bloom means that there is usually a bud or bloom on the bush following the spring flush, sometimes more. The English Roses have more continuous bloom than some of their older sisters, but the spring display, unfortunately, will not last all year long.

Most roses need to be given a regular diet and spray program to perform their best. Imagine the energy it takes the plant to produce the foliage and blooms on a large established bush! If not fed regularly through the growing season, you will see a decline

in the plant and a decrease in bloom production. Any plant in poor health is more susceptible to disease, less able to fight it off, and will have a harder time getting through the stresses of a hot summer and cold winter.

For best blooming, feed monthly with a balanced fertilizer (10-10-10 or 13-13-13) from May 1 through mid-August. Slow release fertilizers such as *Once for Roses* and *Osmocote* can be applied once in the spring with some formulations lasting all season. Liquid fertilizers like Miracle Gro work well but need to be used more often or can be used in combination with other fertilizers. Organic fertilizers such as Mills Mix or manure are wonderful for all roses - manure is great for a winter cover as well.

Roses love water! It's the best fertilizer you can give them, so make sure they have at least an inch or two per week, especially in hot weather. Deep watering will encourage a healthy root system - shallow, frequent watering encourages root growth too near the surface. However you choose to deliver water to your roses, whether by garden hose or sophisticated watering system, damp foliage overnight may encourage fungal disease. Water early in the day to allow the foliage to dry.

No other perennial plant produces the number of blooms for the length of time that a rose does. Don't let the thought of spraying them keep you from enjoying the most beautiful flowers you can have in your home garden. Whenever you spray with fungicides or insecticides, always wear protective clothing, a mask, and goggles. There is a new fungicide spray on the market called *Banner Maxx* that only needs to be sprayed every two weeks. Otherwise, spray weekly with a fungicide - Immunox, Funginex, Manzate, and Daconil are a few. Increase the frequency of the spray to twice a week for two weeks if the plants develop blackspot or powdery mildew, then return to weekly spraying. Spray for insects as needed with Orthene. There are organic products available - Rose Defense and Safer Products that seem to be more effective in areas with shorter growing seasons and less humidity.

There are many opinions on pruning Old Garden Roses - the best advice may be "When in doubt - do nothing". At the least, all dead wood and weak or twiggy growth should be removed. Then prune the bush for a pleasing shape. Once blooming Old Garden Roses should be pruned right after they bloom in the spring. Otherwise, you will be removing some of next year's spring blooms. Repeat blooming roses including English Roses can be left to grow as a large shrub unless you want a more compact bush. They may be pruned back by 1/3 to 2/3 with winter pruning.

The best way to learn about Old Garden Roses is to visit local gardens where they are growing and talk to the growers. Send for and study the catalogs that specialize in OGR's. The following nurseries have a good selection of OGR and/or English Roses.

Antique Rose Emporium
Rt. 5 Box 143
Brenham, TX 77833
(800) 441-0002

Arena Roses
P.O. Box 3096
Paso Robles, CA 93477
(805) 227-4094

<http://www.arenaroses.com/>

Heirloom Old Garden Roses
24062 NE Riverside Dr
St. Paul, OR 97137
(503) 538- 1576

Roseraie at Bayfields
P.O. Box R
Waldboro, ME 04572-0919
(805) 227-4094
zapus@roseraie.com

Roses Unlimited
Rt 1 Box 587
Laurens, SC 29360
(803) 682-9112
www.rosesunlimiteddownroot.com

Royall River Roses
70 New Gloucester Rd
North Yarmouth, ME 04097

Spring Hill Nurseries
110 West Elm St
Tipp City, Ohio 45371
(309) 689-3849
springhillnursery.com

Recommended Reading

- *Landscaping with Antique Roses* - Druitt & Shoup
- *Roses and The Quest for the Rose* - Phillips and Rix
- *Antique Roses for the South* - Welch
- *All About Roses and Enjoying Roses* - Ortho
- *Roses* - Beales
- *Roses of America* - Scanniello and Bayard
- *English Roses* - Austin
- *100 English Roses for the American Garden* - Martin
- *Old Roses and English Roses* - Austin

Courtesy of the Nashville Rose Society website.