

Selecting Roses

for Deep South Gardens

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By Al Whitcomb



Marlon's Day



Burgundy Iceberg



Happy Child

Margaret Wolfe Hungerford, author of *Molly Bawn*, wrote in 1878, "*Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.*" This adage could not be more valid than it is in the choice of roses. Rose colors, fragrance, bloom cycles, growth habits and hardiness are just a few of the considerations that come into play. Sources, propagation methods and health of the specimen are also important considerations. No matter what your selection criterion, chances are good you can find roses to satisfy your needs.

Deciding which roses best fit your needs can be a challenging task. It is almost like a small child walking into a candy store for the first time. There are so many enticing choices. It's tempting to choose too many or base choices solely on spur of the moment aesthetic appeal. In the long run you will make much better choices if you use a more analytical approach. Begin by determining a *rationale* or purpose for your selections. Ask yourself, does this rose have the qualities required to satisfy my gardening or exhibition needs. Investigate all rose categories to learn what plant and bloom *characteristics* are available within rose classes. Take time to *research* specific attributes of roses you are considering. You will want to use a variety of information sources to optimize the quality of your selections.

Rationale

Not all roses are created equal, nor should everyone use the same criterion when choosing roses. Individual rose selections are driven by a variety of reasons. Some rosarians select roses to serve as focal points in their overall landscape, while others acquire them primarily to compete at rose shows. These contrasting goals are important factors when selecting roses. Other issues such as garden size, available gardening time, and tolerance for using chemical fertilizers, fungicides, and insecticides, as well as color and fragrance preferences influence selections.



Desparado



Butterfly Kisses



Sophy's Rose

Characteristics

You probably already know roses fall into three general groups: species, old garden and modern roses. What typical characteristics, if any, can we expect in the different groups and classes of roses? It's important to understand that the rose classification system is far from perfect and you can expect variations within each class. We can thank man's intervention and role as hybridizer for much of that variation. Hybridizers determine a rose's classification. As an example, if a hybrid tea is crossed bred with floribunda, the hybridizer might choose to classify the new rose as a hybrid tea, a floribunda, a grandiflora or possibly even a shrub rose. In most cases the

new rose's class will reflect generally accepted characteristics its class. So let's examine some of their group characteristics.

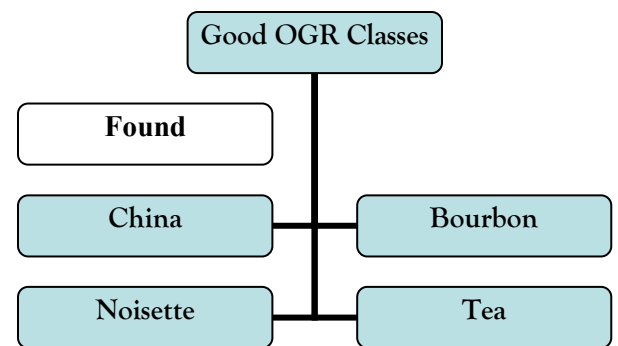
Species Classes

Species roses sometime referred to as wild roses represent the earliest specimens, whose origins date back as far as 35-40 million years ago. Like pre-historic animals many are extinct and almost all are more difficult to find than old garden or modern roses. Many species roses have 5 petals and are white or pink. As you might expect, roses within this group are very resilient, if grown in climatic and soil conditions similar to where they evolved. One of most common and best to grow in our area is *R. laevigata*, aka Cherokee Rose, Georgia's state flower. Many species roses are fragrant, only bloom once a year and require a lot of space. The largest living specimen is *R. banksiae* aka. Lady Banks' Rose grows in Tombstone, Arizona. From a single trunk, it covers over 8,000 square feet of an arbor. Unless you have space and structures to support large specimens, species varieties may not be a good choice for a private garden.

Old Garden Rose (OGR) Classes

As man became involved in crossing wild roses, a new category of rose classes evolved. The category was eventually designated Old Garden Rose. OGR varieties include roses whose class existed prior to 1867. OGR bushes are generally larger than most modern roses and require considerable space to grow. They are known for their resilience and ability to survive with minimal care. In fact, many have been rediscovered in recent years on old homesteads or cemeteries where they have had little or no care for decades. Most OGR rose varieties have been available in commerce long enough for patent restrictions to expire. That means you can propagate them from cuttings until your hearts content, with little or no costs.

Out of the fourteen OGR classes, Bourbon, China, Noisette, and Tea classes provide most of the good choices for Deep South gardeners. A separate category of found or mystery roses provides several additional good choices for our area. Most roses within these groups are desirable because they are remontant, fragrant, resilient and can tolerate our climate and soil conditions. Let's look at a few examples.



China

China roses, originally from eastern Asia, were introduced to Europe in the late 1700's. Up till that time, all European roses bloomed only once each year.



Comtesse du Cayla



Mutabilis



Pink Pet



Louis Philippe

With the introduction of China roses, European hybridizers were able to create other repeat blooming varieties and classes. China rose bushes are generally smaller than other OGR varieties ranging in height from 3-5 feet. Generally they exhibit small blooms growing on cold sensitive twiggy bushes. Most China roses are less fragrant than classes originating in Europe. China colors and blends include red, yellow pink and white. While white blends are fairly common, Ducher is considered to be the only true white China rose. Many are phototropic, that is they change colors as they are exposed to light. A good example is Archduke Charles that ranges from pale

pink to a deep wine red color as the bloom ages. Bloom forms range from singles like Mutabulis; pom-pom shaped Pink Pet, to more globular blooms like Louis Philippe. Some have a spicy fragrance and nearly all are low maintenance, tolerate hot weather and pruning.

Bourbon

Bourbon Roses originated in the Indian Ocean near Madagascar on the Isle of Bourbon or the neighboring Isle of Mauritius.



Souv de la Malmaison



Mme Ernst Calvat

The first Bourbons were introduced in France in about 1820. Typically, bourbons are very fragrant and tend to grow into large bushes. Souvenir de la Malmaison is a popular choice within the bourbon class. Mme Ernst Calvat is the most fragrant variety I have grown and can be grown on a small arbor as a climber.

Noisette

Noisette is the only OGR class that originated in the United States. The first seedling, Champneys Pink Cluster was grown in South Carolina by John Champneys. Philippe Noisette, a French hybridizer, later produced other varieties including Blush Noisette pictured here.



Crépuscule



Céline Forestier



Natchitoches Noisette



Blush Noisette

Noisettes usually bloom in clusters. Early varieties produce small blooms while later varieties resulting from crosses with tea roses are significantly larger. Yellow and pink flowers are most common. Many varieties like Crepuscule have long arching canes and make excellent climbers. While other varieties like Celine Forestier and Natchitoches Noisette are more shrub like.

Tea

Tea roses are the forerunners of our modern Hybrid Teas. Originally, they were named for their fragrance which was similar to that of Black China Tea. The first Tea rose resulted from a cross of Humes Blush China and Parks Yellow Tea Scented China. Later varieties became larger as a result of crosses with Bourbons and Noisettes. Bushes are usually a little larger than Chinas, with longer weak canes supporting drooping large blooms.



Rosette Delizy



Miss Caroline



Mrs B. R. Cant



**Fortune's
Five-colored Rose**



Francis Dubreuil

Pictured here are some diverse examples of tea roses. Rosette Delizy, Miss Caroline, Mrs B. R. Cant, Fortune's Five-colored Rose are all examples of large bushes that can range in height from 6-8 feet. Francis Dubreuil is a medium sized shrub and the most fragrant Tea rose in our garden. Tea roses have a full range of colors and color blend including reds, yellows, pinks and whites. Teas generally do not respond well to severe pruning.

Found & Mystery

Found and mystery roses include those roses whose true identity has been lost over the course of history.



Miss Atwood



Martha Gonzales



Bermuda's Anna Olivier



Maggie



Spice

Mystery or more commonly called Bermuda mystery roses are a great choice for southeastern gardeners because our climate is similar to Bermuda's where they were discovered. Within this group, Bermuda's Anna Olivier, Brightside Cream, Miss Atwood, and Spice pictured here are all excellent candidates for Central Florida gardens. Bermuda's Anna Olivier is a fast growing bush that produces large light yellow roses with Tea characteristics. Brightside Cream is highly scented Noisette that produces masses of blooms and makes an excellent climber. Miss Atwood is a large footprint tea rose that is well suited for a pergola or small arbor. Spice is a very hardy white to light pink China rose with strong, spice fragrance. Maggie exhibits typical Bourbon class form, color and fragrance and many believe it may be a registered rose named Eugène E. Marlitt.

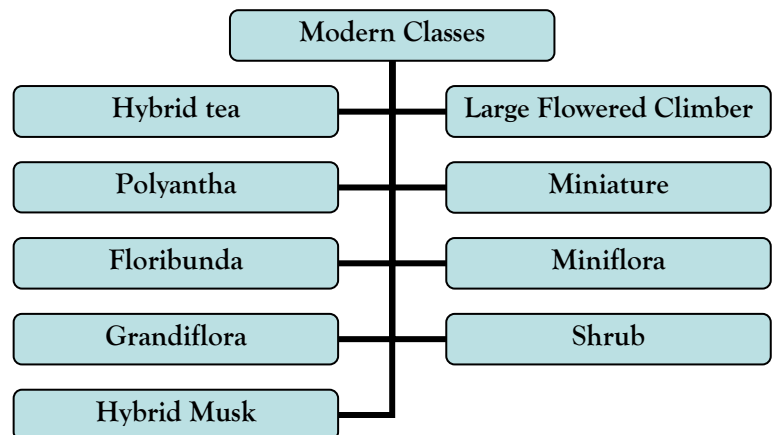


Blushing Damsel

Not all found roses are OGR. One example is the high centered shrub rose called Blushing Damsel pictured here. It is one of the most resilient modern roses I have grown.

Modern Classes

With the advent of our first Hybrid Tea, La France, in 1867, the category of modern rose was born. This category has grown to include 22 classes of roses. The nine modern classes pictured here contain most classes that perform best in the Deep South. Since modern roses are the result of cross breeding of species, OGR and modern roses, bloom size, shape, petal shape, petal count, color, and fragrance vary considerably. Blooms can vary in size from less than an inch to over six inches in diameter. Bloom shapes range from high tight centered roses that typify Hybrid Tea (HT), Grandiflora (GR), Miniflora (MinFl) and Miniature (Min) varieties to single, quartered, rosette, globular and cupped forms more commonly found in Floribunda (F), Shrub (S), Polyantha (Pol), and other modern varieties. You can choose almost any color rose other than black or blue. Many hybridization programs have focused on rose form and color to the detriment of fragrance and disease resistance characteristics common in many OGR and Species classes.



Hybrid Tea (HT)

The first Hybrid tea roses came from crosses of tea roses with hybrid perpetuals. If you were to ask someone on the street to describe a rose, they would most likely describe a high centered single stemmed rose like Veteran's



Veteran's Honor



Saint Patrick



Signature



Excite



Gemini

Honor. It exhibits standard characteristics of the class and is a favorite for many rose growers. HT forms may be quite different. Excite is a single HT and Gemini usually produces blooms in sprays. Hybrid Teas are the most popular modern rose. Most are beautiful, but many lack good traits like fragrance and disease resistance. If you are going to be a serious exhibitor, you will want to select several Hybrid Teas.

Polyantha (Pol)

Polyanthas first appeared on the scene in France in the late 1800's. They were developed through crosses of china roses and European multiflora roses. They are usually short compact plants that exhibit small clustered sprays of



La Marne



Crystal Fairy



Martha's Vineyard



The Fairy

flowers. Shorter varieties make excellent border plantings. Polyanthas are one of the best choices you can make if your primary objective is a beautiful rose garden continuously in bloom from spring to fall.

Floribunda (F)

Floribundas are result of crosses of Polyanthas and Hybrid Teas. Typically they bloom in sprays and their blooms forms range from Polyanthus to Hybrid Tea forms as you might expect. Like Polyanthas, but somewhat larger,



French Lace



Butterfly Kisses



Our Lady of Guadalupe



Kanegem

these are good choices for landscaping because of the number of blooms they produce. Butterfly Kisses pictured here is a good example of singles within this category. French Lace and Kanegem are representative of a few Floribundas with bloom forms similar to high-centered Hybrid Teas. Many Floribundas have bloom forms similar to Our Lady of Guadalupe pictured above.

Grandiflora (GR)

Floribundas and Hybrid Teas were crossed to produce Grandifloras. The result was larger bushes that produce either single or sprays of blooms. Roses pictured below are good examples of this variety.



Candelabra



Queen Elizabeth



About Face



Tournament of Roses

Large Flowered Climber (LCl)

Fourth of July and Clair Matin are two of the best LCl to grow in the Deep South. Night Owl is also a beautiful example of a climber, but thus far has not produced in our garden as well as the other two examples. Climbers



Fourth of July



Clair Matin



Night Owl

tend to require a lot of space in southern gardens because our long growing season promotes exceptionally large plants. A frequent error made by new rosarians is to use structures that are too high making maintenance more difficult. Lower wider structures will result in more blooms and easier maintenance.

Hybrid Musk (HMsk)

Hybrid Musks are the result of crossing *Rosa multiflora* and *Rosa muchatta*. They are known for their disease resistance and musk fragrance. Their blooms are normally found at the end of long arching canes. Many varieties in this class can be grown a climbers.



Nur Mahal



Cornelia



Buff Beauty



Ballerina



Prosperity

Miniature (Min)

All classes of Old Garden Roses have corresponding miniature forms. Many small European varieties have been crossed with Asian varieties to produce repeat blooming miniature roses. Most range in height from 6 inches to 36 inches. Grace Seward, pictured at the left is exceptionally vigorous and can grow to a height of five feet.



Grace Seward



Soroptimist
International



My Sunshine



Lipstick 'n' Lace



Green Ice



This is the Day

They make ideal container plants which can be grown as patio plants as long as they get about 6 hours of required daily sunshine. As you can see they come in both single and double forms.

Miniflora (MinFl)

In recent years, hybridizers developed larger and larger varieties of miniature roses. Competition between old and new varieties was no longer fair because of this disparity. It became necessary to create a new class called



Foolish Pleasure



Abby's Angel



Seattle Sunrise



Autumn Splendor



Tiffany Lite

Miniflora. They are larger than miniatures but smaller than other hybrid varieties like Hybrid Teas and Floribunda. Roses pictured above good examples of this class. Many can reach a height of 4 ft and are good choices for border plantings or for exhibiting at rose shows.

Shrub (S)

Shrubs are popular because of their resilience, beautiful colors and variety of bloom forms. Summer Wind and Prairie Harvest are two of many excellent roses hybridized by Dr. Griffin Buck. I would recommend most of his roses to southern gardeners because of their hardiness. Everyone is familiar with knock out Shrub roses. They have been a god send to the rose industry because of there popularity which stems primarily from their low



Morden Blush



Sophy's Rose



Sally Holmes



Outta the Blue



Summer Wind



Prairie Harvest

maintenance requirements. David Austin, a world famous English rose hybridizer has introduced numerous beautiful fragrant Shrub roses. Sophy's Rose pictured above is a good example of one his roses that performs well in the Deep South and is especially well suited landscape applications.

Research

Now, that we have explored the possibilities lets look at selecting specific roses. Before you select roses, it's important to do some basic research. Accumulate as much information as you can on roses that are grown in your area by using local experts, visiting local rose shows, public and private rose gardens.

Experts

The easiest place to meet experts in your area is at a local rose society meeting. You can find local rose society information and contacts at: <http://www.ars.org> . At local society meetings, you will find plenty of rosarian experts who are knowledgeable and willing to share information on selecting, exhibiting and growing roses. If you are experiencing a particularly challenging problem choosing or growing roses you should talk to a Consulting Rosarian. The American Rose Society trains and tests local rosarian experts and designates them as Consulting Rosarians. Consulting Rosarians will provide you free advice over the phone or through personal visits to your garden. You can locate local American Rose Society (ARS) Consulting Rosarians on the internet at http://www.ars.org/Crs/cr_by_area.html.

Publications

Whenever possible use reference material written by local experts who know which roses grow well in our southern climate and soil. If publications focusing on your specific local area are not available, you still can find good basic information on selecting roses in national publications. The ARS Handbook for Selecting Roses describes rose characteristics and serves as a rose-buying guide to more than 3,000 rose varieties. It is based on national survey of rosarian recommendations and can be obtained by joining the ARS or can be purchased separately. Because of the widely differing growth patterns and sizes of rose bushes, you should use information on plant tags, other references publications like Ortho's: All About the Easiest Roses to Grow, by Dr. Tommy Cairns. It contains detailed pictures and information on several roses that will be very helpful in your selection process.

Internet

Most of you are internet surfers. There is a wealth of information available on the internet, but be cautious in applying it, because it may contain recommendations based on colder or dryer climatic conditions or soil structures different from those in our area. Here are some useful links:

- Modern Roses 12 (Subscription) <http://www.stsrv.com/modernroses12/mr12.htm>
- Deep South District of the American Rose Society <http://www.deepsouthdistrict.org/index.htm>
- Help Me Find - Roses <http://www.helpmefind.com/roses>
- EarthKind™ Roses <http://earthkindroses.tamu.edu/>
- Woodland Rose Garden – Growing Roses in the shade <http://www.woodlandrosegarden.com/rose/shade1.htm>

If you want to compete at rose shows, and have an ultimate goal of winning Queen of Show you will want to weight your purchases with those Hybrid Tea and Grandiflora roses with potential to win. To help narrow your choices, research the records of recent rose shows in the ARS Deep South District on its website.

On the other hand, if your primary goal is just to produce a garden full of beautiful roses your selection options are much more flexible. In any case, select bushes that fit available spaces in your garden. Roses should be spaced far enough apart to insure they have room to grow, good air flow and room for easy maintenance. There is no single pat answer on how far bushes should be planted apart. Internet sites like Help Me Find - Roses can be helpful in determining potential bush size and popularity. It is important to note, rose bushes tend to grow larger in the Deep South than the average sizes you will find in national publications and on the internet.

Time spent learning which roses are low maintenance and easy to grow is paramount for people who have limited time to care for their roses. Texas A & M University oversees the EarthKind™ program which lists the lowest maintenance roses to grow.

While most rose require at least 5-6 hours of daily direct sunlight, you can find recommendations on roses that are somewhat shade tolerant on the [Woodland Rose Garden](#) website.

Plant Sources

Using good sources when buying roses and rose garden supplies will go a long way toward increasing your chances for success in growing beautiful healthy roses at minimum cost. If you are lucky, you have a local nursery that specializes in rose and rose gardening supplies. Mail order sources listed below are excellent sources particularly if you want the latest popular roses to exhibit at rose shows.

- Cool Roses <http://www.coolroses.com/>
- K & M Roses <http://www.kandmroses.com/>
- Bay Gardens <http://www.baygardens.org/>
- Rosemania <http://www.rosemania.com/>

Box stores, like Home Depot, Lowes and Wal-Mart also can be used if you are careful with selections and root stock. Almost all roses will perform better if they are grafted on fortuniana root stock. OGR and EarthKind™ roses on their own root can be purchased from any local source (Home Depot, Lowes, flea markets etc.). Many other mail order sources can be found on the internet.

Final Plant Selection

The final step is plant selection. To increase your chances of success choose containerized roses, grafted on fortuniana root stock. Fortuniana root stock will increase the vitality of your roses and help counter the threat of nematodes prevalent in Deep South sandy soils. Always try to select roses with at least three basal breaks of healthy new canes emanating from the graft. Grade one grafted roses are best, but are difficult to find. Choose healthy green plants, with little or no evidence of disease or insect infestation. Buying a plant with a notion you will be able to correct its deficiencies is not a good idea.

If you follow the steps outlined above, you will be well on your way to selecting beautiful roses that will meet your needs.