

# Special Gardening Edition

HARRY P. LEU GARDENS

## *ROSES! ROSES! ROSES!*

**S**ooner or later, everyone who has a garden thinks about growing roses.

There are no practical reasons – if a gardener were to really need one – for deciding to do just that. For one thing roses outperform practically every other kind of garden plant in Florida in the number of flowers they produce, in the length of their blooming season and in their normal life expectancy. But most gardeners become rose growers simply because they fall in love with the flowers. Roses have a charm and elegance matched by a thorny strength and a satiny-petaled delicacy. Their blooms come forth in a wonderful variety of colors, sizes, shapes and fragrances. It is this, the sensuous appeal of roses, which had made them the world's best known and most popular ornamental plant.

Any word about roses should begin with words of encouragement for the beginner. Growing roses in Florida can, after all, seem to be a daunting task. Roses do require a bit of pampering and for the beginner, growing them in the Central Florida climate can be overwhelming. A gardener may think that roses make such unique demands that growing them may be beyond one's ability.

Historically, roses have long been important at Leu Gardens. Mary Jane Leu introduced them when Leu Gardens was a private estate, begun in 1936. Since then the rose garden has developed and



*Princess de Monaco*

evolved into the large formal garden that it is today. Although major changes have taken place in the rose garden over the years, the largest may have taken place just four years ago when the decision was made to display only those varieties appropriate for growing in the special conditions of Central Florida's climate. The nearly 150 selections of roses are constantly being evaluated and any that do not perform well are removed and replaced with others that are more heat tolerant, pest and/or disease resistant and more floriferous.



*Margo Koster*

Growing roses in Central Florida is a constant challenge due to the long periods of heat and humidity. With environmentally sensitive

gardening as a core principle, the staff of Leu Gardens strives to keep the application of pesticides to a minimum. The key, therefore, is to use roses that are produced for Florida gardens.

Nurseries grow a *Rosa*

*fortuniana* rose for two years in a container and then graft or bud a variety of rose like a hybrid tea onto it. The plant onto which the hybrid is grafted is called the under stock or rootstock. This is done by making a tee type cut along the bark of the under stock, taking a bud from the tea rose and inserting it into the cut of the under stock. This is covered with biodegradable tape to protect it and keep it clean. The little "bud" then starts to grow and becomes the top of the rose bush. The next spring any stems of the rootstock are cut away and the grafted rose or "scion" takes over. It is allowed to grow for one more season and then it is shipped to the nursery.

Grafted plants are composed of two different roses; one forms the root system (rootstock) and the other the top (scion). Most rose plants sold have been grafted on one of three different rootstocks. Of the three standard rootstocks, *Fortuniana* (*Rosa fortuniana*, Double White Cherokee or Evergreen Cherokee) gives the best results. Dr. Huey (Shafter) is second best. Multiflora (*Rosa multiflora*) is the least satisfactory rootstock because it is the shortest-lived under Florida conditions. In Central Florida it is important to



Chicago Peace

grow roses grafted on *Rosa fortuniana* rootstock. Less expensive roses are available but decline in the garden after

a short time (two to three years). Properly grown, roses grown on *Rosa fortuniana* rootstock can grow for several decades. The less expensive selections will, even with proper care, last only a short time because of their inability to fend off the diseases and nematodes (microscopic worms) found in Florida soils. Most roses with a *Rosa fortuniana* rootstock are labeled as "fortuniana certified."

After proper rootstock evaluation, it is important then to select those varieties of roses that have been proven winners in the Florida climate (see Leu Gardens' list of preferred selections below). Not all roses are created equal. A rose may have a nice fragrance or a beautiful color but may be prone to disease and insect damage.

Planting of roses is easy if a few simple steps are followed. The best soil for growing roses is one that has good drainage, which allows air and water movement to and from roots, and will hold an adequate supply of moisture



Kentucky Derby

and nutrients. When you remove the rose from the container check to see if any roots are making a circle in the shape of the pot. Break these roots up or pry them loose and stretch them out. Plant the rose so the graft union (the bulge on the main stem where the rootstock was grafted onto the upper part or scion) is about an inch above the soil line. Fill the hole around the rose with good topsoil and press the soil in firmly around the root ball. Water the rose bush, making sure that the roots get soaked and cover the bare soil with mulch. Mulch can be pine bark or pine straw. Most native sandy soils have low water and nutrient holding capacities and heavy rains easily leach nutrients beyond the roots. As a result, plants may suffer from drought only a few days after rain or irrigation, and from nutrient deficiency only a few weeks after fertilization. Such soils can be improved with soil amendments. At the time of planting, soil amendments such as alfalfa meal or dehydrated cow manure can be added to the soil in the hole. Until they are

established, roses will need thorough watering at least twice a week. Roses are heavy feeders so make sure you fertilize approximately every six weeks with a product that has been formulated for roses. Nutrients are most readily available to the roots in a moderately acid to slightly acid soil (pH 5.5 to 6.5). Roses are relatively tolerant of salt spray and can be grown satisfactorily



appear with fungicides specifically designated for roses. These can be obtained at most garden stores. Just be sure to follow manufacturer's directions. Fungicides for black spot must be applied on a regular schedule usually about once a week. Keep in mind that some roses are more and some less susceptible to blackspot than others. Those found on the list seen below have been selected for their resistance (but not immunity) to blackspot.

The other two major pests, aphids and mites are common when plants

near salt water with adequate soil preparation and maintenance.

Rose care at Leu Gardens starts in late winter with an annual pruning. Individual roses are pruned the last week in January. At this time, depending upon what type of rose it is, the rose canes may be pruned to about 5 strong canes 12 inches long (for hybrid teas, grandifloras and floribundas) or longer for old garden roses, shrubs roses and climbers. After the harsh pruning all leaves are removed to eliminate any persistent fungus (blackspot or powdery mildew) spores. This is also the time of year when it is best for common housekeeping chores including plant replacement, mulch renewal and leaf removal (black spot can appear over winter in dead leaves on the ground so try to clean up as many as possible). Although a container grown rose can be planted at any time of the year, roses become established best if planted in February or early March.

In Central Florida, the prevalent disease, which affects roses, is blackspot. In addition to the yellow halo surrounding the black spot, the disease can also cause the leaf to turn yellow and drop off. To keep ahead of black spot, which cannot be cured, only controlled, you need to start spraying early just as the new leaves

are growing under stressful conditions namely, water and nutrient deficiency. Certain rose selections are also prone to spider mite and can be lessened by proper plant selection. Mites can be controlled by spraying a hard stream of water to the under sides of the leaves and to the new growth for aphids. Chemical controls are rarely needed but are available if other methods fail.



### *Sources for more rose growing information:*

*The National Rose Gardener,*  
Lance Walheim

*The Rose Bible,*  
Rayford Clayton Raydell  
*Roses, The Most Beautiful Roses for Large and Small Gardens,*  
Otto Buneman

*Beautiful American Rose Gardens,*  
Mary Tonnetti Dora

*American Horticultural Society's Practical Guides – Roses,*  
Linda Hawthorne

### *Websites:*

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/MG036>

<http://hort.ifas.ufl.edu/gt/roses/roses.htm>

<http://www.floridagardener.com/misc/roses.htm>

<http://www.blossomsandbloomers.com/florida.htm>

## ROSES THAT PERFORM WELL AT LEU GARDENS

Hybrid Tea: Mr. Lincoln (red), Veteran's Honor (red), John F. Kennedy (white), Secret (pink & white)

Grandiflora: Princess de Monaco (pink & white), Melody Parfume' (lavender)

Floribunda : Ice Berg (white), Sunsprite (yellow), Angel Face (Lavender), First Kiss (Pink)

Miniature: Sweet Nothing (deep pink), Small Miracle (white), Feisty (red), Raspberry Punch (pink)

David Austin: Pat Austin (orange), Dark Lady (red), Tradescant (red)

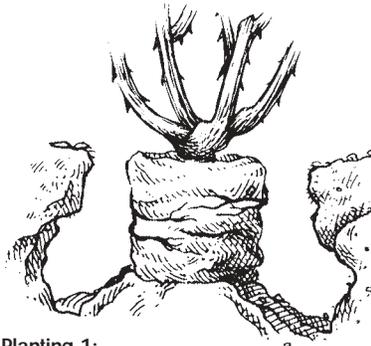
Old Garden Roses: Old Blush (multi-colored red and pink), Louis Phillipe (red)

Bermuda Mystery: Maitland White, Spice (white)

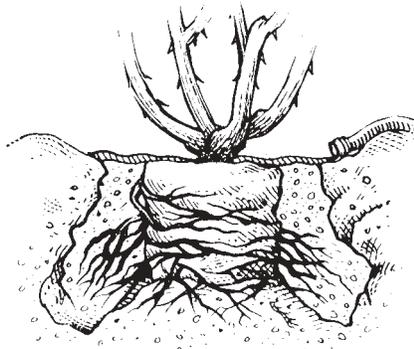
Shrub Roses: Carefree Wonder (pink), Carefree Delight (pink), Knock Out (deep pink)

*By – Helen BeVier and Cecil Hawley*

## Planting Roses



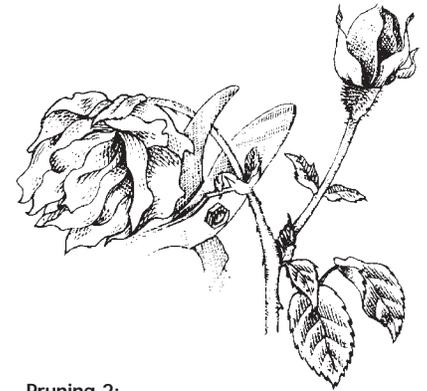
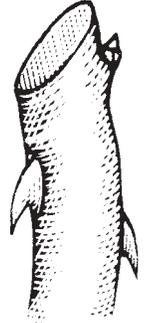
**Planting 1:**  
Dig a hole slightly shallower than the depth of the root ball. Remove the root ball from the container and gently loosen circling roots



**Planting 2:**  
Fill the hole with soil. Build a soil basin and water thoroughly.

## Pruning Roses

**Pruning 1:**  
When making pruning cuts, cut about 1/4 inch above and outward facing eye. This helps develop an open, spreading habit and reduces diseases by increasing circulation.



**Pruning 2:**  
Deadheading, removing spent flowers, encourages the rose plant to produce more blooms.



**Pruning 3:**  
Disbudding is the removal of small side flower buds on hybrid tea roses. It channels energy into the main flower, resulting in a larger flower.

