

ENGLISH ROSES

The English rose is a relatively new type of rose, developed in the 1960's. It is appropriately named for its country of origin. The best-known hybridizers are David Austin's English Roses and English Legend Roses by Harkness of England. These two nurseries have bred and successfully introduced over 150 different varieties of English roses.

The very best of their parents' characteristics prevail in the offspring of this cross between the spring-flowering Old Garden rose and the modern hybrid tea and floribunda. The most notable of these characteristics are:

1. The delicate charm and fragrance of an old rose exists in nearly all the descendants.
2. English roses have repeat blooms with old-fashioned flower form, providing a long season of color beginning in early June and usually going well into October.
3. English roses grow from 2 feet to 6 feet tall and 3 feet to 5 feet wide, with climbers growing from 8 feet to 14 feet high.
4. Their varying sizes provide bedding plants as well as taller plants that are well-suited for placement behind other plants.
5. They can be used to form both hedges and barriers.
6. The roses have gained a reputation for being easy to grow with excellent health and clean foliage.
7. The plants are hardy in zones 5-10.
8. There are at least 20 thornless varieties.
9. At least 16 varieties will prosper when grown on north-facing walls and in other partly-shaded areas, providing they get 4-5 hours of sun per day. The blooms of these varieties usually have 16 or fewer petals.
10. There are climbers that will ascend arches and pergolas, grow high into trees, and cover the sides of unsightly buildings.

English Roses are typically classified as "shrub roses". This term was created by the American Rose Society to encompass bushy roses that did not fit any other category. The class includes several major subclasses – the hybrid musks; hybrid Rugosas; hybrid moyesii; hybrid kordesii; the unique group first developed by David Austin, commonly called English roses, and others that don't fit into any other classification. Many are modern varieties, others old, and some ancient. They are considered to be hardy, easy-care plants; some make good groundcovers, others work well as hedges and screens, while still others fit well in a flowering border or in a container. Many of the modern shrubs bloom continuously throughout the season, and some old varieties have a single flush of flowers in the spring. You can find all types of flower forms from single (five to sixteen petals) to full double blooms, and in many different colors and shades.

Shrub roses are impressive for many reasons – their natural disease-resistance, their willingness to grow in a variety of climates with a minimum of attention from the gardener, their growth habit that may require little pruning, and the great beauty of their flowers.

Consider all of these positive attributes, including a wide range of color, when adding these wonderful plants to your garden. To see English roses growing in Vancouver, visit Esther Short Park, where you will find about 2 dozen different plants in the north/center section of the park garden. The garden is maintained by volunteers from the Fort Vancouver Rose Society.

References:

<http://www.davidaustinroses.com/> (David Austin roses)

<http://www.heirloomroses.com/> (Austin & Harkness roses)

American Rose, published by the American Rose Society

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