



"AUSTIN POWER"

Roses with International Intrigue

Constance Vierbicky, CR
therosequeen@comcast.net

Because of the influence of my "Victorian" grandmother, I have always had an affinity for things that look old-fashioned. Consequently, English Roses captured my heart the very first time I saw them in 1990. They reminded me of the exquisite flower paintings of the Old Dutch Masters. Their intoxicating fragrances (Tea, Old Rose, Musk, myrrh and fruit), their beautiful colors, and the awe-inspiring beauty of their various cup forms ... it was love at first sight.

English Roses were originally hybridized by David Austin, a farmer from Shropshire, England. During the 1950's, he had the unique idea to combine the flower form, fragrance and general characteristics of Old Garden roses (shrubby growth, matte foliage, once flowering) with those of modern (upright growth, shiny foliage, repeat-flowering) Hybrid teas, Floribundas and Climbing roses. Old Garden Roses also present a limited spectrum of colors: white, pink, purple, and mauve.

Modern roses have a wider range of colors including yellow, apricot and true crimson. In other words, he wanted to create **Modern Old Roses**, which is a strain that combines the best features (Austin's personal choice) of each class. He also wanted them to be very special in their own right, so he called them **English Roses**.



The English Rose Queen Nefertiti, a constant bloomer and favorite in Connie's Garden

It takes approximately eight years for David Austin to progress from a pollen cross to seed, seedlings, field tested roses, and world test gardens. Only then is a new rose brought to market. His first introduction was in 1961, through a nursery in England owned by his friend Graham Thomas. That rose was called Constance Spry. He usually names his roses after people, places, charity or literary figures. Constance was beautiful but was not remontant (repeat flowering), so Austin backcrossed her to another repeat flowering rose. With that cross, a new dimension of rose hybridization was upon us. "Antique" looking roses with incredible fragrances that reboot consistently. Initially, these roses did not create a sensation throughout the world, because this had never been done be-

fore. I think the rose world, at that time, was enamored with the look of the Hybrid Tea. The English Rose now enjoys a reputation of distinction and has opened the world's eyes to the immense class of shrubs. David Austin Roses Limited now sells about 4 million rosebushes a year throughout the world.

English Roses produce splendid, fragrant arrangements for my home, friends, classroom or church. Their fragrance fills an entire room, capturing your senses the moment you enter. They mix well with



Arrangement of English Roses wins top awards at rose show

other roses and offer a graceful, charming accent. Even though I am not an avid exhibitor because of my work schedule, these roses have managed to place me on the awards table frequently in the last decade.

I care for my Austins much like I do any of my other roses. Generally, I find them to be hardier, less susceptible to blackspot, and more prolific than most of the bushes in my garden. Organic fertilizers of my preference. Beware: Too much nitrogen may cause vegetative centers Austins. I always get a soil test the first week in January to determine if I need to alter anything in my fertilization schedule for the coming year. My feeding schedule is given on the next page.

My roses bloom from April till the following mid-February when they are pruned back. I do not prune the bushes especially hard, but rather lower the overall height by 1/2, share the bush and leave many branches in the "Y" position just like you would prune an Old Garden Rose or a Floribunda. This allows for a profusion of sumptuous flowers.

I am a consistent fungicide sprayer, rotating Compass, Cleary's or Banner Maxx. I add Dithane T/O or Manzate to each spray for added protection. I am a mad woman with a water wand so spider mites rarely get the chance to invade my bushes. I take a spraying rest between December and February's pruning because I know I will strip the leaves off my bushes after I prune. It is at this time when you see how hardy Austins really are. I have grown almost sixty varieties

the last fifteen years and I have included a chart of information about the best of them. I have also included the ones that will not bloom well in our hot, humid Southern climate because we do not have a surplus of chill-hours for them! Remember, this is for my growing zone of 9b and growth heights will vary according to growing zones.

Finally, should there be a separate taxonomic group for these English Roses? I would like to think so since that would give more exposure on the award tables to the other available fine shrub roses. If the Floribunda (cross between a Hybrid Tea and a Polyantha) can be a separate class, then so can an **English Rose!** As you can surmise, these roses are, to me, **the most beautiful roses in my garden.**

| | | | |
|--|---|---|---|
| February & August | Purely Organic Mix (1-800-892-2651) | 2 cups per bush | Spread around bush and water in well |
| April (after first flush) September | Osmocote 15-9-12 w/minors (6 month time release) | 1 cup per bush | <u>Less</u> for smaller bushes |
| January (Then every other month) | Epsom Salts Milorganite Gypsum | 1/2 cup per bush 2 cups per bush 1 cup per bush | Spread around bush and water in well |
| Every month | Sul-Po-Mag | 1/4 to 1/2 cup | Smaller amounts for smaller bushes Larger amounts for larger bushes |
| Three Times a year, Spring, Summer and Fall: The Pawlikowski Drench: Mix all the ingredients in a 32-gallon garbage can and fill with water. Make sure beds are well watered before applying. | Fat Free Dehydrated Milk Fish Emulsion Epsom Salts Maxi Crop Powder 1-0-4 (Dehydrated seaweed) Sequestrene (Chelated Iron) (If bushes need greening up) | 4 cups 2 cups 4 cups 1/3 cup 1 cup | NOTE: First put the Maxi Crop into a large bucket with hot water to dissolve. Then add the other ingredients to the bucket and mix into a slurry. Pour into a 32-gallon garbage can and fill with water. Each bush gets one gallon of the solution. Wash solution off foliage and water in well lightly after applying. |

| Small bushes | Medium Bushes | Large Bushes |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| Ambridge Rose (ab) ** | Bow Bells (dp) | Abraham Darby (op)** |
| Blythe Spirit (my) | Crocus Rose (ab) | Charlotte (ly) |
| Belle Story (lp)** | English Garden (ab)** | Chaucer (mp) |
| Fair Bianca (w)** | Lillian Austin (pb)** | Fisherman's Friend (dr)** |
| Glamis Castle (w)* | Molineaux (y)** | Heritage (lp)* |
| Miss Alice (lp) | Perdita (ab)* | Jude the Obscure* |
| Mary Magdalene (ab) | Portmeirion (mp)* | Mary Rose (mp)* |
| Perdita (ab)* | Pretty Jessica (dp) | L.D. Braithwaite (dr)** |
| Prospero (dr)** | Queen Nefertiti (pb) | Marinette (mp) |
| Sharifa Asma (lp) | Sophy's Rose (rb) | Pat Austin (or) * |
| Tamora (ab)** | The Dark Lady (dr)** | Radio Times (mp) |
| The Dove (lp) | The Squire (dr) ** | Scepter'd Isle (lp) |
| The Prince (dr)** | Winchester Cathedral (w) | Tradescant (dr)** |

* Shatters quickly ** Blooms that show well

Stingy bloomers in Sarasota, Florida are: A Shropshire Lad, Benjamin Britten, Charles Darwin, Cottage Rose, Eglantyne, Ellen, Evelyn, Falstaff, Gertrude Jekyll, Golden Celebration, Graham Thomas, John Clare, Othello, Sweet Juliet, Symphony, Tess of the Urbervilles, The Mayflower, William Shakespeare 2000.

SOURCES FOR ORDERING ENGLISH ROSES:

David Austin Roses Limited, Tyler, Texas, 1-800-328-8893; email US@davidaustinroses.com;
website: www.davidaustinroses.com

Muncy's Rose Emporium, Cairo, Georgia, 866-476-7673, email: Muncyroset@muncyroset.com;
website: www.muncyroset.com

Wayside Gardens, Hodges, SC, 1-800-895-1124; website: www.waysidegardens.com

Chamblee's Rose Nursery, Tyler Texas, 1-800-256-7673, www.chambleeroses.com

There are many other catalogs and local nurseries that carry English Roses, as well.