

All Those Years Ago (Voices from the past, on rose care)

By Dave Ingram, Education Chairman, Denver Rose Society

Why reprint a rose-care article from 1923? Because it's a chance to share with our members—especially our newer ones—that many of the principles we use in planting and growing roses have been known and used for a long time. See for yourself how much this 86-year-old article speaks to what we do today.

In 1916, the American Rose Society (ARS), then a small organization of mostly professional nurserymen, asked printer and photographer J. Horace McFarland to be the editor of a new idea—an American Rose Annual, a bound book of articles on rose growing scholarship and experience. He did so for 29 years, reaching out to the masses of amateur growers around the United States. The ARS exploded in size and enthusiasm, evolving into the organization we know today. He was awarded the first ever ARS Gold Honor Medal in 1933, and had four roses named in his honor during his lifetime: Horace McFarland, Editor McFarland, The Doctor, and Breeze Hill (named after his Pennsylvania estate), all of which remain in commerce today.

The following article originally appeared in the 1923 Annual. I have edited it slightly, removing outdated chemical remedies, and added [bracketed comments] when appropriate. I think you'll enjoy Dr. McFarland's wonderful Victorian phrases as much as his rose knowledge.

BEGINNING WITH ROSES By The Editor (J. Horace McFarland, L.H.D.)

The rapid increase in membership of the American Rose Society, and the earnest desire shown by the acute rose-lovers who make up the major part of its membership to help those with less information, have led to the suggestion there be printed [in this year's Annual] primary directions and suggestions for succeeding with roses, later to be made separately available.

The paragraphs that follow are therefore addressed to the beginner. If the article was more extensive, it might have been entitled "A Primer of Rose-Growing."

It is intended that the directions to follow shall be quite general in their character, and that they shall cover only the preparation of soil, the obtaining and handling of plants in suitable varieties, their proper planting, and cul-

ture during the first season. By the time the beginner has cared for roses for one growing season, he will, particularly if he has been conferring, as is his fine privilege within the American Rose Society with others of like desires be no longer a beginner with roses, but will have knowledge of his own and be ready to assimilate and use what he can find in the American Rose Annual and in other publications beyond the primary relationships.



American Pillar

Location and Soil - Roses demand an open, yet protected situation in so far as the bush sorts are concerned. It must be open in the sense that there is free air circulation and access to sun at least 60 percent of the time, and protected in the sense that it is not subject to the assaults of unchecked gales. If a rose bed is to be located contiguous to some planting which forms a windbreak, it must not be close enough to be influenced by the roots of the trees or shrubs composing the windbreak, for the Queen of Flowers will simply retire from the scene rather than compete with hungry tree roots.

To grow roses to success and pleasure, good soil must be provided. The rose is a strong feeder, and while plants



Christine Wright

can drag out an existence in poor soil, they will not provide in those conditions the growth and bloom that well-enriched soil encourages. This is emphasized because failures from planting in poor soil, poorly prepared, are inexcusable.

There is little present sympathy with the old idea of soil preparation to 3 and 4 feet of depth, so extensive and difficult as to repel and prevent rose effort. Eighteen inches of thoroughly efficient preparation, above any part of the preparation necessary to secure good drainage, will give excellent results, but it should be noted that the word "thorough" is used. It means such digging and raking as will completely intermix the soil and the fertilizer. Rose roots do not travel far to hunt food; it must be close by.



Columbia

stones, sods, and rubble of any sort which will permit the water to drain away.

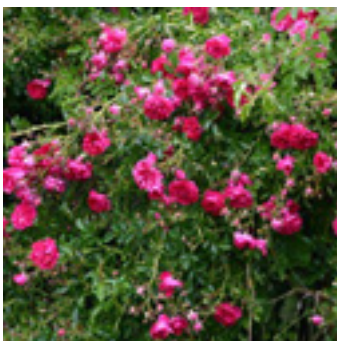
No material is better for enriching the soil than well-rotted animal manure. Cow manure is desirable, but not essential, and ordinary stable manure, if it is thoroughly decomposed, is satisfactory. It should be used in considerable quantity, even up to one-third the total bulk of soil in the beds, and it must be, as before noted, thoroughly intermixed with the ground, though under no condition must unbroken clods of manure come in contact with rose roots.

Additional fertility is readily added in the way of ground bone, and where soils tend to be sour [acidic] the sweetening effect of a little slaked lime or wood ashes is most desirable. [In Denver, our soils are usually too alkaline (or sweet) to start with, so no additional lime is needed. This article was also written before pH measurements were known.] The ground bone, or bone-meal is added at the rate of a good trowelful to each plant.



Dorothy Perkins

The location and soil are mentioned first because there ought to be full preparation before plants are obtained.



Excelsa

A word concerning the methods of placing roses may be here in point. They are better handled and watched and cared for in relatively narrow beds, not more than 3 to 4 feet in width, and if these are arranged so that they are framed in by any protective border, there is usually good garden design.

What Sort of Plants - There are those who insist that only own-root plants are proper to plant, and there are those who are equally insistent upon the virtues of budded or grafted roses. Either form, in frankness, does well where it does well, and the beginner may well be guided by the amount of money he can spend. The mail order, own-root roses are usually smaller and younger, and cost less, and they may be adventured with on that basis. The outdoor-grown, own-root, budded or grafted roses are much larger, ought by all means be planted in a dormant condition—not from pots [true in those days]—and usually give a quicker and more extended result. [The beginner] may be assured, however, that whether he plants own-root or budded plants, getting a good quality of plants in either case, the result is mostly in accordance with the care and attention he provides.



Frau Karl Druschki

What Varieties to Plant - The report given [elsewhere] in this Annual of the remarkable referendum conducted in 1922 among the members of the American Rose Society does give light on varieties. [This was a first attempt at what later became the “Proof of the Pudding” rose survey, which today is called “Roses In Review.”] This report on the best dozen bush roses and the best dozen climbing roses, classified as it is, tells the beginner what he may rely on anywhere in the United States. Outside that list, the world is his field, limited by his ground and his pocketbook; and it is not the place of this essay to advise him, save to urge that he does put in the dependable roses to keep him encouraged, both in bush and climber classes, independent of his experiments and the pursuing of his own tastes and desires.



Gardenia

A word should be said concerning early ordering. There can be no least doubt that the dormant rose begins action much earlier than is ordinarily supposed, and that the sooner it gets in the ground after the ground is workable in the spring the more likely it is to do well. There is every urgent reason, therefore, for early ordering and early receiving, even if the roses come before the ground is dry enough to handle, when they can be protected by “heeling in” in earth for a few days.

Receiving and Planting Roses - The field-grown outdoor plants, as has been stated, usually come dormant—that is, without leaves or growth—with their roots kept damp by moss.



Hiawatha

They should be opened in a protected place, away from sun or wind, and without delay “heeled in” by digging a shallow trench in which they are safe while the final planting preparations are being made. If the packing material is in the least

dry and there is any sign of shriveling in the tops, it is a good plan to bury the whole bundle in moist earth three days at least, covering roots and top alike with 6 inches of soil.

The own-root growing roses can be kept in shelter, but with their tops exposed to air and light, and always with enough moisture applied about the roots to keep them moist.

Preparation for planting of the field-grown roses is primarily pruning. [In those days, most bare-root roses came with long canes that needed to be cut back. Nurseries usually do that now before plants are shipped.] Any broken or mangled roots should also be trimmed clean, all this work being done in complete shelter and on the basis that every moment the root is out of the ground it is being damaged. If planting is to be done at once after the pruning, the pruned plants may be kept in a pail of water, from which they can be taken, one at a time, as actually put in the ground.



Kaiserin Auguste Victoria

The own root plants seldom need pruning, unless there is abnormally long growth. Any sort of transplanting is a check, and if there is this long growth it is well to cut them back somewhat.

The actual operation of planting is simple, but needs care. In the previously prepared ground an ample hole should be dug to receive the roots of the plant, spread out much as they were in the nursery. A little mound at the bottom of the hole on which the roots may be separated and spread is an advantage. It is an outrage to bunch the roots; don't do it! The plant should by all means be set

at least 2 inches deeper than it was in the nursery, so that the bud or graft is completely covered. [*Growing Roses in Colorado* recommends 2 to 4 inches beneath soil level for grafted plants, and 1 to 2 inches for own root.] Now sift in around the roots the finer top-soil, gently shaking the plant up and down to settle it under and among the roots—there must be no air spaces below. As the ground is added, make it firm, at first gently, and after the roots are completely covered, solidly, so that when the ground-level has been reached the plant is actually planted.

The distance apart to plant depends on the plants themselves. Teas and Hybrid Teas in outdoor-grown stock do well at 18 inches apart [Modern day HT's and Floribundas probably need more room; Teas are not hardy in our area.]; Hybrid Perpetuals, Rugosas and bush roses take more space, even up to 3 and 4 feet. Hardy climbers must be planted according to their desired effect, and in a hedge ought not to be closer than 6 feet, to give room for the canes that are to come.



Killarney

Let there be caution as to putting in any own-root rose which shows mildewed or diseased foliage. Don't do it! Put that plant in a little secluded, open-ground hospital somewhere, and dose it with dusting sulphur and lead arsenate [Good Grief... I think we can do better and much safer in 2009.] until it is well enough to associate with its brethren. Mildew and blackspot, the two rose troubles most prevalent in America, are contagious, and it is sinful to start wrong, with infected plants.

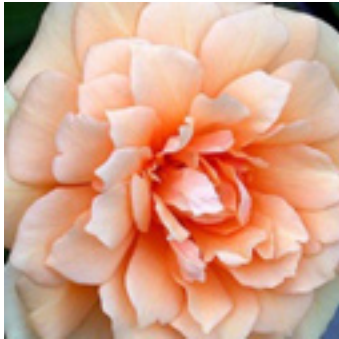
Summer Care - After the plants have begun growth, and all through the summer, there should be continual surface cultivation [I would nowadays recommend a 3-inch covering of mulch instead]. If the season is dry, an occasional thorough watering, with emphasis on the word—will be helpful. No weeds should ever appear, and there should be watchfulness as to any possible “suckers” from the stock on which field-grown are budded. These suckers will appear separate from the main stem, and will usually have leaves of a differ-



Mme Edouard Herriot

ent color, and showing a different number of leaflets. It is not hard to distinguish them. They should be cut off underground immediately on being noticed.

Insects and diseases can be protected against, first, by careful culture as above noted, and second by the use of several simple items of care. The rose aphid or "louse"

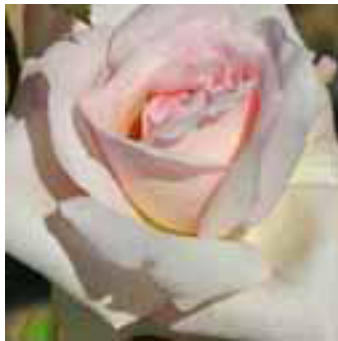


Mrs. Aaron Ward

can be removed quickly by a forceful stream of water. [In addition, a broad range of modern methods are now available to fight pests and diseases. Talk to a Consulting Rosarian, or visit your local nursery.] It should be noted that mildew is on the leaf and occasionally can be removed, while black-spot is in the leaf and itself surely removes the leaf, forcing the plant to make new foliage, which is readily reinfected.

Cutting Roses - By all means use the roses that bloom. If they are cut with reasonable discrimination and long stems, their removal tends to strengthen the plant and start it toward producing more buds. Be liberal with your roses and your roses will be liberal with you.

Winter Protection - [In terms of] climatic sections and winter protection it is sufficient here to say that winter damage, save in the very coldest neighborhoods, is more from high winds, the hot sun, and successive freezing and thawing than from low temperatures. Hilling up with earth for 6 to 12 inches and covering over that with any loose material that will keep off excessive water, seems to carry roses through in the most arduous climates. In much of the territory of the United State a less protection, like evergreen boughs, is ample.



Ophelia

Bonus Material

The reference to the "remarkable referendum" on the best dozen bush and climbing roses for 1923 are listed below, in the original order, with votes cast in their favor. I've added an (*) to those I believe are now lost to commerce, at least in the U.S.



Paul's Scarlet Climber

The "Favorite Dozen" Bush Roses in the U.S.:

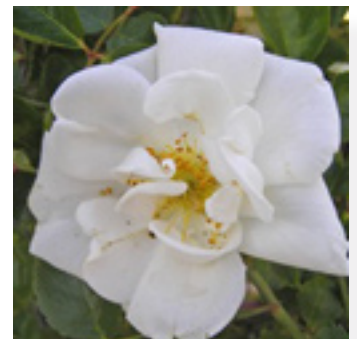
Ophelia, 202
Frau Karl Druschki, 183
Radiance, 163
Los Angeles*, 114
Mrs. Aaron Ward, 108
Gruss an Teplitz, 107
Duchess of Wellington*, 103
Mme. Edouard Herriot, 82
Columbia, 74
Killarney, 74
Kaiserin Auguste Victoria, 75
Sunburst*, 70



Radiance

The "Favorite Dozen" Climbing Roses in the U.S.:

Dr. W. Van Fleet, 262
Silver Moon, 197
American Pillar, 174
Dorothy Perkins, 122
Paul's Scarlet Climber, 107
Cl. American Beauty, 106
Tausendschon, 100
Excelsa, 68
Gardenia, 50
Christine Wright, 46
Hiawatha, 38
Aviateur Bleriot, 23



Silver Moon

I know. I hadn't heard of a lot of them either. If you wish, you can look them up at www.helpmefind.com/roses.

The American Rose Society is over 100 years old. It is arguable the finest and most influential plant organization in the world. The ARS is the best resource of rose information I know. If you want to be a better rosarian, and are not a member, please consider joining. It's worth it for more information. Visit the website www.ars.org.

All photos used with permission of Vintage Gardens
www.vintagegardens.com
A splendid collection of old and classic roses.