

A ROSE BY ANY OTHER NAME

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January is the season of temptation. All those beautiful catalogs. All those beautiful pictures. All those names! And now with the surge in popularity of *old roses*, the confusion only increases. So, I set out to do a little research and see if there was some way to make sense of it all.

It all begins with ***SPECIES ROSES***, the "wild roses". Over 200 species flourish around the world and some are even recognized as state flowers right here in the US. Wild roses are always single, have only 5 petals, and the North American varieties bloom only once a season. Species roses are the ancestors of all cultivated roses. In 1867, the American Rose Society recognized the development of the first hybrid tea rose. Any variety (natural hybrid) or cultivar (man-made hybrid) identified *before* 1867 is classified an ***OLD GARDEN ROSE*** while those identified *after* a ***MODERN ROSE***.

MODERN ROSES

Not too long ago, nearly all roses found in local nurseries or offered by mail-order were modern roses. There seems to be an endless combination of colors, flower forms, and growth habits thanks to the efforts of plant breeders.

Climber & Rambler: These are not "vines" like ivy or clematis. They contain no tendrils but rather have very long pliable canes that must be supported. Most produce flowers in clusters and blooming seasons vary

depending on the cultivar.

Floribunda: The name tells it all - "flowering in abundance". These roses were developed in Holland in 1911 with hybrid teas and polyanthas as parents. They flower in clusters and are often used as hedges or in mass plantings.

Grandiflora: We can consider this rose group "the new kid on the block". It was developed in Great Britain in 1954 and the first cultivar, 'Queen Elizabeth' was named in honor of her coronation. They are descendants of hybrid teas and floribundas and can grow to be very tall with large flowers.

Hybrid Tea: These still remain the most popular of all the modern roses. 'La France' was the first and the bloom that ushered in the age of the Modern Rose. They are known for their long stems and wide range of bloom sizes and colors.

Miniature: These tiny replicas were first bred early this century by Colonel Roulet from a dwarf Chinese rose. They became widely available though only after the 1960s when their popularity in gardens and in pots on porches and patios caught on.

Polyantha: The name comes from Greek and means "many flowered". They have large clusters of many flowers and are usually low growing (up to 2'). They are very hardy but their popularity has been eclipsed by the floribunda.

Tree: This is not really a class of rose but rather a distinct garden form. Its popularity makes it worth mentioning. Any hybrid tea, floribunda, grandiflora or miniature can be made into a tree rose by grafting it onto a sturdy trunk of

established rootstock. They are lovely and novel but need careful pruning to maintain their shape and special protection against freezing.

OLD GARDEN ROSES

There is a renewed interest in the old roses and many growers are now featuring them in their catalogs. This renaissance may be due to a nostalgia for the past or desire for stronger fragrances, hardiness and disease resistance.

Alba: The Romans were probably the first to grow this group of roses. Albas were popular during the Renaissance and have been identified in Italian paintings of that period. They produce pale pink or white blossoms once a year.

Bourbon: This group of roses was brought to France from the Isle of Bourbon in the Indian Ocean in the early 1800s. They are repeat bloomers with single or double flowers of white, pink, red or purple.

Centifolia: The name itself describes this rose-- over 100 petals for each bloom! They are often called "Cabbage Roses" and bloom in clusters once each year. Their red, pink and white blossoms were once grown widely in the Provence region of France.

China: British traders first brought these roses from the Orient in the late 18th century. They have played an important role in the development of many of today's hybrid roses. Their small, semidouble pink or red blooms appear all season long.

Damask: These were brought to Europe from the Middle East by Crusaders and are still valued today for their wonderful fragrance. Their double or semidouble

pink, white or red blossoms appear once/year.

Gallica: The "Red Rose of Lancaster", symbol of one faction in the 15th century Wars of the Roses, was a gallica. It is the earliest European species that still exists. Gallicas bloom once each summer with single or double pink, red, or red and white striped flowers.

Moss: This group of roses got its name from the velvety green moss-like sheen on their stems and sepals (leaf-like structures just below the petals). This hardy white, pink, red or purple rose blooms once a year.

Noisette: We can claim this grouping of rose as American. It was bred in 1828 by a South Carolina planter and taken to France by a man named Noisette. It is a repeat bloomer with white, pink, red, purple or yellow flowers.

Portland: This was the first European rose (named for the Duchess of Portland) to bloom more than once a year. It was bred in Italy and is a cross between Damask and China strains. It produces double blooms of pink, red or purple.

Tea: Don't confuse this group with the modern hybrid tea of today. It came from China and was introduced to the West in 1808. The name comes from its tea-like fragrance. It is a repeat bloomer with semidouble or double flowers in white, pink and yellow.

The vocabulary of roses could go on and on but understanding the primary groupings of *OLD GARDEN ROSES* and *MODERN ROSES* is a start. Personally, I still agree with William Shakespeare: *"What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet."* *Romeo & Juliet*