

# BUYING ROSES FOR SOUTH FLORIDA

Greater Palm Beach Rose Society, February 2024

Presenter: Denise Abruzzese, Consulting Rosarian, foxviewroses@gmail.com

## Types of Rootstock (in order of preference):

**Fortuniana:** You can get these at Cool Roses in West Palm, Living Colour in Fort Lauderdale, Nelson's Roses north of Orlando. You can also get these mail order from Nelson's Southern Roses and K&M Roses. Home Depot and Lowes will occasionally have these. They will be in the blue pots. These grafted roses will do well in the ground in South Florida and will live 10 to 20 years. They are not bothered by nematodes. They will not do well in cold weather. Some roses will not bloom on Fortuniana like Graham Thomas climber

**Own Root:** If on own root and in the ground and makes it more than 3 years, it could live for 100 years. Examples will be China Roses or Bermuda Roses. Also some English climbers do well.

**Multiflora:** This rootstock seems to do very well in South Florida for a few years and then will decline. It's best to put it in a pot.

**Dr. Huey:** This will last only 1 - 2 years in the ground. It will live longer in a pot.

**Lexa:** This rootstock need cold weather to flower. Will not survive in South Florida

## Types of Roses that do well in South Florida:

**Hybrid Tea Roses:** They do well on own root and most rootstocks in pots only. They do well on Fortuniana in the ground. Examples are Mr. Lincoln, Tiffany.

**Old Garden Roses:** Old roses, such as Teas, Portlands (Damask Perpetuals) (these need afternoon shade), Bourbons, Noisettes, Hybrid Perpetuals, Bermuda roses, china roses do well here on own root in the ground. Some can be grafted onto fortuniana but be forewarned that they will get HUGE. Old Garden Roses that DO NOT do well in South Florida are: gallicas, damasks, albas, Centifolias and Moss Roses.

**Polyanthas:** These have smaller flowers and bloom profusely. They are sometimes used as landscape hedges. Clotilde Soupert is an example. They do very well in South Florida.

**Floribundas:** Most do well in South Florida depending on the rose. They tend to have clustered flowers and are basically hybridized polyanthas. Ex. Julia Child

**Grandifloras:** Most do well in South Florida depending on the rose. The flowers are usually much larger than Floribundas. Ex. QueenElizabeth, Mother of Pearl

**Miniatures and Minis:** These can be planted right in the ground. Miniatures have very small flowers but the bushes can get quite large. Red Cascade is an example of a climbing miniature which I have in a hanging basket.

**English Roses/Shrub:** The English roses are a mix. Some do well on fortuniana. Most of the climbers do well on own roots and when grafted onto fortuniana won't flower. There are many english rose bushes that do well on own roots in the ground here and when grafted on fortuniana can be very large.

**Earthkind:** These were developed by Texas A&M University and do very well in South Florida Belinda's Dream is an example.

For specific roses, you can ask one of our consulting rosarians or check out Victor Lazzari's book, 100 Roses for South Florida. It's an excellent resource for specific roses.

## SUN

We are now zone 10B. Roses generally need 6 hour minimum of full sun. In South Florida some roses can take all day full sun. But many need 4 - 5 hours of morning sun and afternoon shade. So keep this in mind when choosing your location. I have many roses that are planted underneath palm trees so they get filtered sun all day. There are some roses that may also thrive in the shade. You can look up any rose characteristics/requirements on helpmefind.com.

## PLANTING

After choosing your location, dig a hole 20" x 20". **Keep in mind roses need airflow so when planting, plant from 3 to 4 feet on center apart.**

## SOIL

**Amend your soil!** Most rosarians say to remove 50% of what you dig up and mix the remaining amount with your soil mix. I remove it all and mix potting soil, manure and compost. I also add 2 inch layer of peat moss to help resist nematodes. Feel free to add manure, compost, worm castings, blood meal, bone meal and, most importantly, crab meal to ward off nematodes which feed on the roots of roses. Amending your soil is one of the most important parts of growing roses as our sandy soil lacks nitrogen and many other nutrients. Mound your soil so the roots spread out around and sprinkle mychorrizal fungi on the roots when planting. This strengthens the roots system. If you use this, do not use a fungicide in the ground like a drench.

**PH:** Roses like a PH of 5.5 to 6.5. My preference is 6.0. If the PH is too high, nutrients cannot be uptaken to the canes. **Use your PH tester on a regular basis!** To lower PH use potassium sulphate, sulphur. Sometimes rainwater will lower it as well. To raise PH (which almost never happens in South Florida) use baking soda, volcanic ash.

## Water

Use a water meter to test your water level. If you grow roses in pots, remember that while they have to be watered daily in the summer months (sometimes twice a day), in late fall and winter only water every other day. Water when soil is dry and water deeply to encourage strong root growth. Think 1 - 2 gallons per rose. Remember though to always water prior to fertilizing.

## Fertilizing

**Test your soil Nutrients!!!** In Florida we have sandy soil that drains quickly. And when the rainy season hits, it washes all the nutrients right out of the ground and/or pots.

**February:** Use a long term fertilizer like Osmocote Plus 8 - 9 month granular. Also, use alfalfa pellets. One to two cups per plant and water in.

**March through June:** Use a balanced fertilizer like Max Sea 16 16 16. I use this weekly. You can use it every few weeks.

**July - September:** Use Potassium Sulphate or Banana Water. Keep as many leaves on the bush as possible and do not give nitrogen so the bush can weather the hot weather. Blooms will be faded and smaller. This is normal. Feed with potassium and phosphate rich fertilizers like Milorganite and K-mag or Potassium Sulphate. The goal is to keep lots of mature green leaves on your plants. They help cool your roses in the brutal heat of the summer as well as help remove the extra water in the soil from the heavy summer rains. Leaves also produce energy through photosynthesis which is used for flowers in the winter months but is stored in the plants stems in the summer. When we cut roses in the summer, that energy is wasted on spindly stems and inferior blooms and causes stress to the plants. The tender new growth that results from cutting attracts every insect in the state to your rose garden.

**October - November:** This is the time to put down horse manure or other composts.

## Diseases/Insects

Most pests can be eliminated with spraying such as Captain Jack's Dead Bug Spray. There are exceptions. The alternative is to release predator insects such as lacewings, ladybugs and pirate bugs. Also releasing good nematodes in the soil will help lessen the bad nematodes in the soil. A good source of these predator bugs is Arbico Organics. Make sure to release predator bugs at night when the dew is on the roses.

**Aphids** These are little green insects that suck on new buds and new growth. They can be squished with your fingers if there are just a few. Use an insecticidal soap if they are found in large numbers.

**Chili Thrips** Chili Thrips are minute bugs and show by the crinkled leaves with brown marks underneath and buds that won't open and brown. As the weather cools down, the thrip activity will decrease and in warmer weather they will their life cycle is shorter. If you need to treat them, the best choice is Conserve rotating with a product like Merit. This insecticide routine is effective on Chili thrips, but you should apply it early morning or late in the day, when bees are not active. An alternative would be a ground drench of imidocloprid. It's safer for bees.

**Gall (Crown & Root)**

Crown gall presents as a cauliflower like growth on the rose. Root gall presents in small growths on the root of the rose which can also show as inflamed roots. These are highly contagious and the rose must be bagged and thrown out. You cannot plant another rose in the spot without solarization of the soil for 3 months. All tools must be bleached so as to not spread it.

**MealyBugs**

This are horrible white bugs that adhere to the canes. You can kill them with 70% alcohol. Sometimes you may need to scrub the cane with a brush.

**Scarab beetles**

In April, you may notice beetles in the blooms. They can be knocked off into a jar of water with a little Clorox added. (Or they can be squished between petals or rose leaves). April is often dry and sometimes you will get a infestation of spider mites later in the month. They live on the underside of the leaves and are very small. If you have them, the leaf will start to lose color and feel gritty or sandy on the underside. A hard blast of water to the underside of the leaves will control them. This should be repeated several days in a row, or every other day for about 3 days, then once a week until the rains start. You can also use the Imidocloprid drench to kill them while they are grubs in the ground. I would do this in March

**Spidermites**

Spidermites thrive in dry conditions, but you can control them with a hard spray of water to the undersides of the leaves. If you have leaves that are a light green, or grayish, shake the leaf over a white sheet of paper. Using a magnifying glass, you will see the tiny spider mites. If you have an infestation, do the water spray every other day for three treatments.

**Blackspot**

Keep up with your weekly fungicide spray program. Do not use horticultural oils when it is over 80 degrees. Spray early in the morning or late in the evening to avoid spray burn. Alternatively, you can use cornmeal. One cup around the base of the rose and water in. Use every 3 to 4 weeks. Pull off blackspot-infected leaves whether your spray or not (this should be done year-round) and throw them in the garbage. Pick up all fallen leaves to stop the spread.

**Powdery Mildew**

This can happen during dry season. You can use a diluted whole milk spray every few days to eradicate this.

**Rose Rosette**

This is caused by the mite. It is transmitted easily from one bush to another through the wind and through contact. Immediately bag the rose and then dig it out and toss out in a sealed bag. We do not have this in Florida at the moment but everyone should be aware. There is no remedy for this disease yet but research is ongoing.

## Pruning

Sharpen your pruners. The cuts you make while pruning should be sharp and clean. If they are not or it is difficult to cut a cane, try sharpening (or replacing) the blade on your pruners. It is also highly recommended that you disinfect your pruners between pruning each different bush so you are less likely to spread disease between bushes. This can be done with spraying the blades peroxide, alcohol or with Lysol™ or using Lysol™ wipes. Do not use bleach, as it can damage steel pruner blades. It is a good practice to clean, dry and store your pruners (inside).

Prune your roses no later than Valentines' day. When you prune, do so just above a 5-leaf cluster (choosing an outward facing bud eye), no more than 1/4" above the bud eye that is at the base of the leaf cluster. If you more than 1/4" of stem is left you often will get dieback that can continue down the stem. Usually it's best to prune 1/3 off the height of the bush. For hybrid teas, you can prune to 1/2 height or more if necessary. Remove any dead, dying or diseased canes. Remove any crossing canes. Remove canes that are thinner than a pencil. Seal the cut canes. After you have completed pruning, it is recommended that you seal the cuts on larger canes. Simply apply a small amount of Elmer's Glue-All™ on the cut end of each cane. Try not to get any glue on the bud eyes. If you have a lot of stems left (which will be the case with some varieties) you should concentrate on sealing the larger canes and don't bother with the smaller ones. Just make sure that you are not expecting rain when you do the sealing, as the glue will wash away if it has not had time to dry. For climbing roses prune all lateral canes to two or three bud eyes. For main canes you prune of any dead, diseased or dying main canes or canes growing in the wrong direction. If you have too many main canes, prune off the oldest ones.

Remove remaining foliage. In most cases, when you have completed spring pruning, there will not be many leaves left. Then you can remove the remaining foliage. In the unlikely event that you have a lot of healthy foliage remaining, it can be left on the bush. All cuttings and leaves should be put out for collection and not left in the rose bed or put in a compost bin. They can be harboring disease or unwanted pests, which you do not want attacking your new growth.

Do not prune once bloomers until after they bloom. Do not prune roses that are less than one year old. Some older garden roses do not like pruning. An example of this would be Mrs. BR Cant. You will have blooms 5 to 7 weeks after you prune.

During the growing season, it's you should always pinch off blooms to encourage new blooms to grow or you can prune down to the first 5 leaf node. You should always remove dead, dying, diseased or die back (blackening) canes through out the year.

**TAKE CLASSES WITH YOUR LOCAL ROSE SOCIETY! Every month we give a class, presentation, or hands-on lesson on rose and garden care such as propagating roses, pruning, companion plants and organic rose care. And take advantage of the free advice from consulting rosarians!**