



ROSES

BY JOHN MASON

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John is a well respected member of many professional associations, and author of over thirty five books and of over two thousand magazine articles. Even today, John continues to write books for various publishers including Simon and Shuster, and Landlinks Press (CSIRO Publishing).

GROWING AND USING ROSES

by John Mason

Forward

A beautiful bed of roses can be a gardener's pride and joy.

Roses are generally reasonably healthy plants, and they live a long time if their health is maintained.

Roses are grown in both Singapore and the cold north of Canada and Europe; but the techniques used are different from one climate to another.

The selection of disease resistant species and good cultural practices are essential to grow roses in extremes of humidity and cold.

I pruned my first rose during the winter of 1969, while in first year of my horticulture diploma at Burnley Horticultural College in Melbourne, Australia. In 1985 I visited Singapore Botanic Gardens and was surprised to see roses flowering well at sea level close to the equator.

While working as a Parks Director in 1975, I discussed roses with a Polish engineer at the council, who described how the roses he grew in Poland could be covered with a metre of snow in winter; but still emerged in the spring, provided he treated them right.

When I moved to Queensland in sub-tropical Queensland in 1992 I began growing roses in a hotter, humid climate; and was amazed (after some hints from my friend Colin Campbell), to discover you can get rose flowers 12 months of the year on the Gold Coast.

Disclaimer: Information in this book has been derived from both John Mason's experience, horticulture staff and referring to a range of references which are considered to be written by reputable authorities. Nevertheless, one should always be cautious when using any plants as a food or medicine. The information in this book is provided as a point of interest, and a starting point for further research, A second opinion is always advisable before using roses as a medicine or food.



John Mason stands on the steps of artist Claude Monet's garden at Giverny, France.

CHAPTER 1 HOW TO GROW ROSES

Roses are members of the plant family Rosaceae, and of the genus Rosa. The Rosaceae family includes such members as, brambles, strawberries, crab apples, hawthorns, wild cherries, apples, apricots, pears, peaches and so on.

There are more than 100 species in the genus *Rosa*; mostly prickly shrubs, sometimes climbing or trailing, mainly from temperate climates, normally 5 petals and many stamens inserted on a disc at edge of calyx tube.

Roses have been cultivated since as early as 2000 years BC (in China). Modern roses have largely originated as hybrids of the species roses which have been grown for centuries.

Roses can be grown almost anywhere that people live. You may need to treat roses differently in different climates, but they are remarkably versatile plants, that once established, are hardier than many people would imagine.

If you want the best from your roses; always buy healthy plants and choose a sunny well-drained position to plant them in. As they have a shallow, fibrous root system, avoid planting near large trees which have shallow spreading roots. Generally it is also best to avoid planting other plants beneath or immediately adjacent to your roses. Good ventilation and plenty of space around your roses will help reduce the likelihood of disease problems occurring. There are exceptions to this though, such as very hardy cultivars grown in a cottage garden amongst herbs, herbaceous perennials, and other cottage garden plants, or where companion plants are used, such as garlic, provide some protection against pests and diseases.



Roses will grow in almost any site, even in a garden on a steep slope with terraced beds as at Windrest cottage, New Zealand.

Providing good soil conditions will help ensure your roses stay healthy. Most roses will tolerate a wide variety of soil types, but prefer reasonable drainage. Adding gypsum to clay soils will help improve soil structure - this means that roots will be able to grow and spread out better within the soil. Adding well-rotted organic matter to the soil will help retain moisture, improve soil structure and nutrition, and help maintain soil temperatures at suitable levels for growth. If your soil has an acid pH adding lime will generally prove beneficial. The lime can be added to the soil prior to planting, or sprinkled onto the soil surface for establishing roses.

Roses respond well to feeding during active growth stages. It is important to note that in warm areas, where there is continual growth over winter, this will require additional fertiliser during this period, relative to the growth rate.

A slow release fertiliser, or well-rotted manure is best. Roots can be easily burnt if they come in contact with strong fertilisers. Be careful to keep rotting material away from the base of the rose. Mulching, particularly during the warmer months, can be very beneficial in reducing moisture loss from the soil, keeping the roots cool, and providing nutrition as any organic material decomposes.

When using a mulch aim to avoid high carbon products like bark or sawdust as they can result in 'nitrogen draw-down'. This can lead to nitrogen deficiency in the rose plants. To overcome this, should it occur, additional applications of ammonium sulphate may be needed.

Watering is essential if a rose is to flower well. Don't let plants dry out. Avoid watering or splashing the foliage,

as this can encourage the development of diseases such as black spot, rust & mildews. It is better to make a dish in the soil at the base of a plant and fill it with water to allow slow penetration, or to install a drip irrigation system, with at least one dripper to every rose plant, preferably two or three drippers per plant to get a more even coverage of water. If you need to water using a hose be very careful when watering from above – don't spray the soil beneath the roses bushes, as this can splash up spores of fungi, such as black spot onto lower leaves of your rose plants.



Roses suit both modern and old world gardens and compliment their surroundings

TO IMPROVE BLOOMS AND SHAPE - PRUNE!

Annual winter pruning is essential to rejuvenate the plant and encourage growth of young wood (flowers form on these young shoots...the more young shoots, the more flowers). In temperate climates, at least half of the top growth is removed each winter, and any dead or diseased, or spindly growth. In snow areas cut plants back very hard (up to 95%) and cover with straw over winter. Always prune back to a bud facing in the direction you want the new growth to go. For example on an open centred vase shaped plant you will want to prune to an upward and outward facing bud to clear the centre of the plant. For a climbing rose it will be an upward bud, for an established weeper it will be to an outward bud and the majority of the upward young shoots on a weeper are reduced to minimize upward growth and encourage the downward weeping effect.

In districts where growth does not cease (eg. tropics), a harsh annual pruning is not performed as this removes many blooms. In such districts regular light pruning is generally carried out - occasionally an annual prune is used to rejuvenate an old overgrown rose.

Roses are usually budded (a form of grafting using a single bud). When you prune them do not cut below the point where the budding has been done. Plants pruned regularly can last more than 100 years.

Roses are sold in two ways- as bare rooted specimens in winter; or potted plants at other times of the year or in winter in warm districts. You will usually find the best selection of plants (range & quality) in early winter when they are first released onto the market. Buying a potted rose has benefits in that you can see the growth habit, health and usually blooms prior to purchase. This is a good way to guarantee you are getting exactly what you want.

AVOID ANNOYING NASTIES

Aphis and caterpillars are major problems. Aphids are a common problem in spring. They can be brown, green or black and are found on the new shoots or flower buds which can cause the rose to have distorted growth or flowers.

To control them organically:

- Use a jet of water to remove them
- Spray with pyrethrum or garlic spray.
- Mix up an organic spray of 1 tbsp pest oil and 1 tsp of bicarbonate soda in 4.5 litres of water.

Other pests you may discover are mites or thrips, depending on your growing conditions and climate.

Two spotted mite (red spider mite):

These are difficult insects to see, so you must look for the signs of attack. The foliage will look dry as if it requires water. Inspect the back of the leaves with a magnifying glass and you will see a fine web with red spiders.

For organic control: Try the same sprays as above. An alternative is to use a predatorial mite which eats the damaging mites.

Thrips: They are small thin black insects that damage rose blooms in spring, particularly light coloured flowers.

Organic control can be difficult and only worthwhile if the blooms are for display or sale. To control spray regularly with a pyrethrum or garlic spray.

Black spot, mildew and rust are common fungal problems.