

THE BOCA RATON observer

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FLOWER Everything's Coming Up Roses POWER By Diane Feen

IF YOU KNOW ROMANCE THEN YOU KNOW ROSES. ROSES ADORN wedding chapels, anniversary celebrations, and Valentine's and Mother's Day festivities. They have an intoxicating sweet scent, captivating color code and a beauty measured by lush petals.

Roses also have a long, illustrious history (35 million years) of sacredness, synchronicity, beauty, war, forgiveness and politics. In 500 B.C. Confucius wrote about roses; in ancient Egypt roses were so sacred that they were used as offerings to the Goddess Isis.

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But it was the Romans who really idolized and worshipped roses. "No ancient people loved and celebrated roses more than the Romans, and the roots of many of the types of gardens grown today can be traced back to the enclosed gardens in Roman villas," says James E. Armstrong, a judge for the esteemed American Rose Society.

Roses have a sweet spot in literary history as well. William Shakespeare in "Romeo and Juliet" said of roses, "What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet." The poet Rumi also idolized roses: "The finest of gardens is a rose garden; it is synonym for paradise."

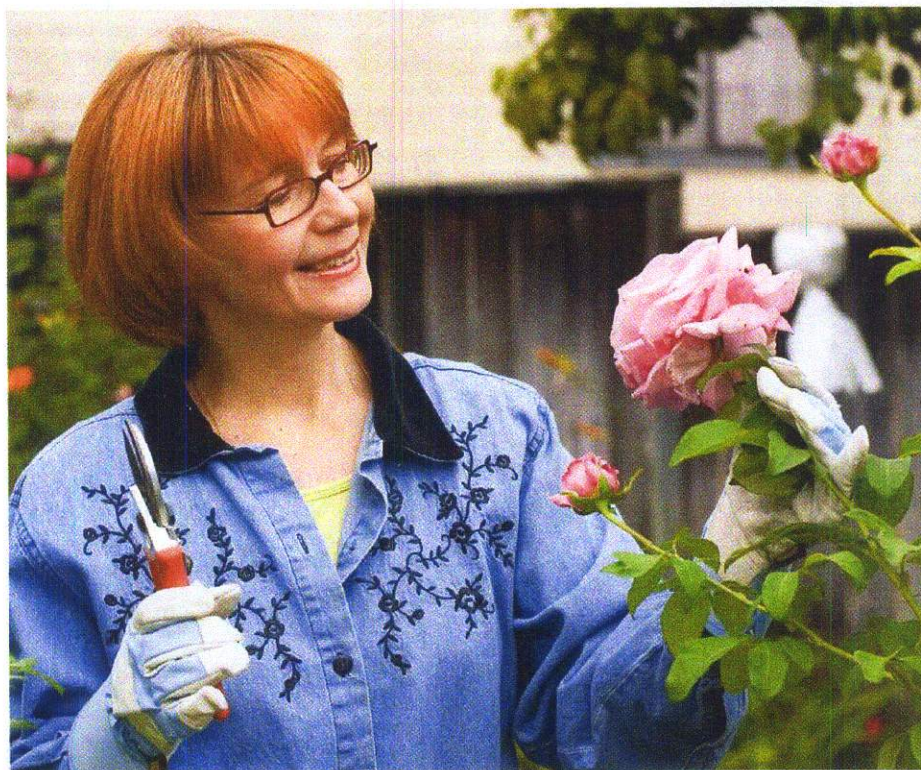


Closer to home, roses also have special meaning. "Roses are my favorite flower. They have such history, they're beautiful and have wonderful scents," says Sherrie Bieber, who helped create the rose garden at the Boca Raton Garden Club.

Like any budding relationship, roses need tender loving care. "You have to be careful where you buy roses. You have to get them grafted on fortuniana root stock," explains Barbara Benefield, a member of the Boca Raton Garden Club. "Roses are finicky and need a lot of care.

If you want to keep your roses alive and thriving you must re-cut the stems at least one inch. This should be done when you get the roses home and whenever you change the water. "Roses drink a lot of water and cannot be left out for more than three minutes," Nemeth explains. "Otherwise air bubbles will be absorbed through the stem, which can cause the flower to wilt prematurely (hence the reason for cutting the stem)."

Another way to keep your roses alive and thriving is to add an aspirin. "The aspirin adds



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They need a lot of water in the morning and they don't like being ignored. It is also best to pick roses early or late in the day to keep them fresh."

Bieber also provides invaluable tips for growing roses. "The more you cut your roses the more they bloom. It's nice to give them away, otherwise they will die on the vine," says Bieber, former president of the Boca Raton Garden Club.

Roses are the number-one selling flower at Field of Flowers stores in Boca Raton, Davie and Coral Springs. "The week of Valentine's Day we sell 25,000 roses in our three stores. Red is the most popular color and the hybrid tea rose sells the best," says Ana Nemeth, the store's director of merchandising.

acidity to the water, which roses like. Even better than aspirin is Sprite, or other clear, citrus-flavored soft drinks," says Donn Flipse, Field of Flowers' president and CEO.

Flipse suggests using a concentration of one-part Sprite to five-parts water. Also good to note: Remove any leaves that will be under water. Also, try not to remove thorns but if you must, remove only the tip and do not disturb the bark of the stem (it will damage the xylem tubes).

Lynn Jawitz, a celebrated floral architect and founder of Florisan in New York City, uses roses for elaborate affairs. According to Jawitz, roses are available in an infinite color range. "Roses are the bread and butter of my



business and a staple of the party scene," she says. Jawitz advises keeping roses away from drafts, out of direct sunlight and to keep them off the top of the TV. "If you re-cut the stems your roses will start drinking water again – do that if the bottom of the stem starts to turn dark green."

Daniel Events in Boca Raton buys its roses from South America, Holland and California and looks for a high petal count, which connotes a good quality rose. "We look for the upper-tier roses, those with a 60-to-85 petal count per rose. The longer-stem roses are always the best quality and give a higher petal count than other roses," explains Jeff Good, an event designer. Good sees a renewed interest in lush, rich shades of pink roses, as well as the old favorite, the Black Magic rose, which is a rich burgundy color.

Good also says that the cross-breeding of roses has resulted in a whole new color spectrum. According to Jawitz, there are "stunning shades of orange," purple, violet, rust and a variety of assorted reds.

The Rose Society of Greater Palm Beach celebrates the beauty and magnificence of roses at

their annual Rose Show, scheduled to take place this April 12 and 13 at the Clayton Hutcheson Center in West Palm Beach's Mounts Botanical Garden.

"At our local show, South Floridians come to display roses from their gardens in hopes of winning a trophy (but also to promote rose growing). When people visit they see what beautiful and fragrant roses can be grown locally," says Bill Langford, second vice president of the Greater Palm Beach Rose Society.

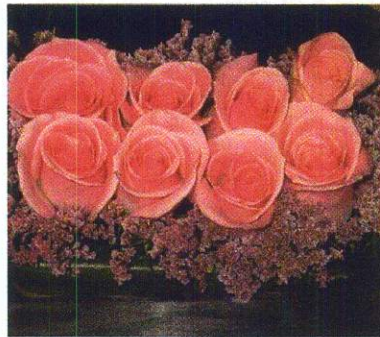
If you want to get a jump-start before this year's rose show, Langford suggests that locals grow Belinda's Dream, Knockout (both shrub roses), and Louis Philippe (an old garden rose known as a "China," introduced in 1834). "Some of the hybrid tea roses that do well here, but require a little more care, are St. Patrick, Veteran's Honor, Mr. Lincoln, Double Delight, Gemini and Louise Estes," he adds.



The most exciting thing about growing roses, according to those who grow them, is that they have a more fragrant smell than many sold in stores. But be prepared: They're not an easy flower to grow. "Roses do require extra care, so when peoples' lives

get busy some of the interest declines. Most people do not take the time to learn the basic rules of growing roses and get discouraged when they don't do well," Langford says.

To those who adore roses, they are sacred to behold. "I've grown Autumn Damask



roses (the twice-flowering rose) for years, and they flourish in my cool coast-side garden, producing wave after wave of fragrant pink blooms all season," Langford says. "Sometimes I pause in front of that tall, vigorous bush and contemplate my connection with a society that vanished 1,500 years ago." ○