

A Room For Roses

By Tammy Randall Wood, ASID

Though I am an interior designer, creating outdoor “rooms” has always been a natural extension of the work I do inside, and often-times becomes my favorite part of a project. Some of the best and most cherished rooms I’ve ever created have been outdoors! Creating a sense of sanctuary is one of the aims I have for almost every space I design, but I think no space in a home has as much unifying and grounding potential as one’s own private plot of earth. The haven of peace and prosperity a well-designed garden can impart is the reason it receives the most prompt attention in any new home I inhabit. I cannot seem to function on all cylinders without a garden to anchor my soul and launch my day. After many years of planting, working, and enjoying the fruits of my labor, no flower has ever been as captivating, as versatile, or as

generous to me and my beloved gardens as the rose.

Volumes have been written about roses and rose gardens, and prose and insights on the topic span every era and reach across cultures to describe a myriad of methods for the art of growing the queen of flowers. Master gardeners, from Ger-

Won't you come into
the garden? I would like
my roses to see you.

~

Richard Brinsley Sheridan

trude Jekyll to Martha Stewart, have inspired and instructed gardeners for generations. In addition to the masters, I rely on the invaluable instruction of the American Rose Society. They are an incredible resource for rose growers, whether one is just beginning or is already a venerated old pro. Here is just a spade-ful of sources I would encourage any enthusiast to consult, in addition to a few tricks, tips, and rules that I’ve cultivated along the way:

To select the roses that I want for my garden, I do two things. First, I consult the American Rose Society Handbook for Selecting Roses, which is available for purchase online. The ARS gives every rose a rating which is “a national average based on overall performance, taking into account the variety’s vigor, disease resistance, flower form, and quickness of repeat bloom.” After I’ve done this, I cut and paste images of each rose I’m considering onto a digital page so I can balance the color values and place complementary tones and growing habits next to one another. This has not only helped me purchase the best choices, but it works as an excellent “map” for where each rose is to be located on planting day.

I love roses, but I also like a tailored look to the approach of a house. Landscape roses in the front of a home can be beautiful in limited palettes, neatly kept along walkways and embankments, or climbing a wall, but I think a formal rose garden really shines as a private, sequestered space away from the front of the house. In the same way that the impact of a single flower is magnified when it’s gathered into a bouquet, concentrating many varieties of rose into one magnificent patch creates a fantastic display.

Structure is the key to any great garden, and this is never more the case than with roses. Take some time to think about the bones of the space, and sketch it out before a single bush is purchased. Vertical supports can give you a sense of architecture. A beautiful way to punctuate the space is with a Tuteur, an elongated pyramid for your roses to climb.





Cream Veranda: Floribunda



Yves Piaget: Hybrid Tea, Romanitca



Love Song: Floribunda



Ebb Tide: Floribunda



Moondance: Floribunda



Walking on Sunshine: Floribunda



Michelangelo: Hybrid Tea



Liv Tyler: Hybrid Tea



Twilight Zone: Grandiflora

I love to plant roses in raised beds of brick, stone, or (depending on your style) railway ties. This creates a stunning pedestal for them to be perched on, and I find that they are easier to care for in raised beds. Soil amendment stays put, weeds are kept at a minimum, and the roses perform beautifully. This can also help create desirable architecture.

Take the time to create rich organic soil for your roses and they will thrive. Excavate your beds two feet deep, and amend them with manure and compost- my very favorite is Kellogg's Organics Gro-Mulch 2-in-1 Planting Mix & Mulch. Keep your beds top dressed in this as well; the dark blanket of nutrients will hold in moisture and give the earth a beautifully finished touch.

Roses do best when their bodies stay dry and their feet are kept moist. Drip systems are the optimal irrigation choice, helping to keep mildew, blackspot, and other diseases that roses are prone to at a minimum. Drip systems also save 20-50% of landscape water as compared to sprinklers.

Don't be afraid to prune hard! Here in Southern California, roses can bloom all year round if you let them, but it's essential that they be forced into dormancy in winter. This so that they can rest and store energy for brilliant blooms the rest of the year. My ritual is to prune my roses on New Year's Day. I take all but the climbers down to about 24" tall, removing all leaves and sprouts and cleaning all debris from around their bases.

No Red Roses. Wait, what? That's what I said! It sounds cruel to exclude such a classic convention, but I've found that if I keep the lipstick red roses out, almost all other colors play together nicely.

This is my favorite tip, and a time-honored interior design trick. Plant colors that look great in your house! The very best part of growing roses is cutting them and bringing them inside. Make a point of choosing an array of colors that compliment your interiors.

I've had the pleasure of growing roses in every region of the country, and no matter the effort required for each climate, they are worth it. Happily, I can report that no place I've ever grown

them is as easy or more rewarding than it is right here in Calabasas. Dry air and sunny days make for perfect cultivating conditions, and the most amazing roses I've ever grown.

Here's to all the roses you will grow, and to creating your own Noble Spaces! ■

Tammy Randall Wood, ASID, is the founder and principal of Interior Archaeology. She has designed an extensive array of projects coast to coast -- from seaside cottages on Martha's Vineyard, metropolitan penthouses and formal Beltway manors to cultivated West Coast compounds. Her firm brings a fresh approach to tailored interiors.

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