

Types of Roses

Hybrid Teas, Grandifloras, Floribundas, Polyanthas, Miniatures, Shrubs, Climbers, and Old Garden Roses
By Steve Jones, ARS President

When you purchase any new rose, it is helpful to know something about each type of rose, its growth habits, size, type of bloom, etc. Some require more care than others, and some are best left alone. These are the different types of roses.

Hybrid Teas When most people think of a rose, they are thinking of hybrid teas. Normally a hybrid tea has a large bloom at the end of a long cane. They are the most popular roses sold at florist shops. They are generally upright growing plants from 3-6 feet and the blooms come in most colors, except blue and black. Examples include Double Delight, Mr. Lincoln, St. Patrick, Veterans' Honor, Gemini, and Brandy.

Floribundas The floribundas were once called hybrid polyanthas. In the 1940s, the term floribunda was approved. They are usually smaller plants with smaller blooms that tend to come in clusters. There are some where the bloom comes singularly. The cluster types make great landscape plants. Comes in most colors. Examples include Iceberg, Angel Face, Playboy, Playgirl, Simplicity, Sexy Remy, and French Lace.

Grandifloras The grandifloras are allegedly a combination of hybrid teas and floribundas with some one-bloom stems and some cluster blooms. The grandiflora term was coined by nurserymen for the rose Queen Elizabeth, which was introduced in 1954, even though Buccaneer could have been argued as the first of this type of rose. The term grandiflora still remains, however, the term is losing distinction over time and could easily disappear. Examples include Queen Elizabeth, Gold Medal, and Arizona.

Miniatures Miniature roses are roses that are smaller in bush, foliage and bloom size. The blooms can range from 1/2-inch up to 2 inches. Miniatures are very popular and can be grown in containers. The plants range in size from about 1-3 feet. Examples of miniatures include Behold, Fairhope, Irresistible, Kristin, and Miss Flippins.

Mini-Floras Mini-floras are a new classification. They are too large to be a mini, but could be too small for a hybrid tea or floribunda. I find most of the mini-floras to be awkward in the landscape. Examples of mini-floras are Cachet, Autumn Splendor, Dr. John Dickman, and Butter Cream.

Climbing Roses Climbing roses are mostly very vigorous roses that can grow to great heights. There are three general types. Large flowered climbers (LCI) are more modern and have stiff canes and usually have good repeat bloom. They can range in size from 8-20 feet. The blooms come in many colors and can have blooms singularly or in clusters. Examples include America, Altissimo, Fourth of July, and Berries 'n' Cream.

The rambler type of roses are usually older roses that are once blooming, usually in the spring or early summer. While once blooming, most will be covered with blooms for a month or more. They are excellent for training on pillars, pergolas, and trellises. The canes are pliable, and the blooms are small and come in large clusters. Examples are American Pillar, Seven Sisters, and Newport Fairy.

Next are the sports of hybrid teas, floribundas, and others, which resemble their bush counterpart except for their climbing growth habit. These usually have an outstanding spring bloom, followed by scattered blooms later in the fall. Examples include Cl. Double Delight and Cl. Queen Elizabeth.

Old Garden Roses

The old garden roses consist of rose classes that existed prior to 1867, the date of the first hybrid tea, La France. The classes include the species (wild) roses, albas, bourbons, centifolias, damasks, eglantines, gallicas, mosses, noisettes, portlands, teas, etc. They come in every growth and bloom pattern and color imaginable. They can range from 1 foot to over 50 feet in height. About half of these roses have good to excellent repeat bloom. Usually obtain through mail order sources. Examples include Lady Banks, Rose de Rescht, Baronne Prevost, and Sombreuil.

Shrubs This is a catchall group. They are generally roses that are hybrids of species, or roses that do not fit nicely in other classes, such as David Austin "English" roses and Dr. Griffith Buck's roses. They are extremely varied botanically and most are available through mail order. Examples are Golden Celebration, Perdita, Hansa, Hawkeye Belle, Starry Night, and Ballerina.

Polyanthas Polyanthas, the "petite" roses of yesteryear, are almost the forgotten class of roses. Of the 500 or so polyanthas introduced since 1875, there are only some 20 or 30 available, usually through mail order. These are low-growing bushes with small flowers in clusters. Common examples are Cecile Brunner, China Doll, Verdun, and The Fairy. Predecessor of the floribunda class.

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