

Classification of Roses

By Hugh Parrish, CR

The American Rose Society (“ARS”), in cooperation with the World Federation of Roses, has recently adopted a new classification scheme that reflects both botanical and evolutionary progress of the rose. This is NOT the only classification system in use, however the majority of the established rose societies in the world have approved this scheme for classifying roses for competition and/or identification. There are three main groupings of roses:

- Species (like the ‘wild roses’)
- Old Garden Roses (“OGR” classes of roses in existence before 1867)
- Modern Roses (classes of roses NOT in existence before 1867)

Species Roses

This is where “wild roses” started, before hybridizers got involved. Species roses are often, but not exclusively, one-time bloomers. Many are single, with only five petals, while others have many petals. Some are fragrant, some are not, but fragrances vary by species. Species roses may be exhibited in a separate class (Genesis Award), or may be shown with OGRs according to their date of introduction.

Old Garden Roses

The roses vary greatly in terms of bush size, bloom size, bloom form and frequency of bloom. The flower can be quartered, cupped, imbricated (overlapped like roof tiles) or expanded, reflexed, globular or compact. Many are one-time bloomers and most are fragrant, with a variety of scents that vary with class.

- A rose is an OGR if it belongs to a class that was established before 1867, although the individual variety may have been introduced much later.
- An OGR belongs to the Dowager class for exhibiting if that variety was introduced before 1867.
- An OGR belongs in the Victorian class for exhibiting if that variety was introduced in 1867 or later.



Celine Forestier, OGR

- Alba: Old European rose, one-time bloomer, very fragrant. Mostly white or pale pink blooms with blue-green foliage.
- Ayrshire
- Bourbon and Climbing Bourbon
- Boursalt
- Centifolia: Old European roses, one-time bloomers, very fragrant. White/pink, very full blooms with lots of petals, sometimes referred to as cabbage roses.
- Damask: Old European roses, mostly one-time bloomers, noted for intense fragrance.
- Hybrid Bracteata
- Hybrid China and Climbing Hybrid China. Roses first found in China, repeat bloomers, roses may actually be red.

- Hybrid Foetida
- Hybrid Gallica
- Hybrid Multiflora
- Hybrid Perpetual
- Hybrid Sempervirens
- Hybrid Setigera
- Hybrid Spinossissima
- Miscellaneous OGR
- Moss and Climbing Moss
- Noisette
- Portland: Cross between China and European roses, most will repeat bloom.
- Tea and Climbing Tea: Also from China and has unique “tea” fragrance, new colors and pale yellows.

Modern Rose Classes

- Floribunda and Climbing Floribunda
- Grandiflora and Climbing Grandiflora
- Hybrid Kordeasii
- Hybrid Moyesii
- Hybrid Musk
- Hybrid Rugosa
- Hybrid Wichurana

- Hybrid Tea (HT) & Climbing HT
- Large Flowered Climber
- Miniature and Climbing Miniature
- Mini-Flora™
- Polyantha and Climbing Polyantha
- Shrub

Hybrid Tea Roses

The most popular group is available in both bush and standard form. The flower stems are long and the blooms are shapely. The typical Hybrid Tea bears blooms that are medium-sized or larger, with many petals forming a distinct central cone. The blooms are borne singly or with several side buds. Hybrid Teas are the royalty of the rose family and probably the most popular flower in the world. They grow about 3 to 6 feet high, are repeat bloomers and produce flowers throughout the growing season. It is a classic rose and the Queen of all roses.

Floribunda Roses

Floribundas are second only to Hybrid Teas in popularity. The Floribunda bears its flowers in clusters or trusses and several blooms open at one time in each truss. This class or group is unrivaled for providing a colorful, reliable and long-lasting bedding display, but in general, the flower form is inferior to that of the Hybrid Tea. The Floribunda is the rose par excellence for providing color in the garden. It can be grown as a bush or a standard, in both formal and informal settings. There are tall varieties used to provide hedges and there are dwarf varieties.

Mini-Flora™

The Mini-Flora™ rose (also called a patio rose) is a group that appeared in the 1980s and now contains many popular varieties. These low-growing roses were formerly grouped with the Floribundas. They are a compact version of this group. Mini-Flora™ roses grow to about 2 to 3 feet in height. Some people place the Mini-Flora™ roses and the Miniature roses together. The Mini-Flora™ rose is here to stay and is becoming increasingly more popular. It has a bushy growth habit. The leaf and flower is in keeping with the size of the bush and there is an abundant display of flower clusters throughout the season.

Miniature Roses

The Miniature rose is a group that is increasing in popularity due to its novelty and versatility. Miniatures can be used for edging beds, growing in pots/containers, in ground or, temporarily taken indoors. Both leaves and flowers are small and, under normal conditions, the maximum height does not exceed 2 to 3 feet. The rose has, for many years, been a favorite British flower. Some people believe that the rose is overpriced. A tiny bush does not seem to be a good value when it is priced almost as much as a Floribunda. I have found it to be a great exhibition rose for rose shows.



Olympic Gold, Miniature Rose

Ground Cover Roses

The Ground Cover rose, like the Mini-Flora™ rose, was introduced in the 1980s. These spreading roses are repeat flowering and have good disease resistance. Use the leafy mounds of roses for covering banks and for planting between taller shrubs. Some are low growing and quite restrained while others may spread widely and grow to heights of four feet. Ground Cover roses have come of age. They are a new group and have risen from near obscurity to center stage in a remarkably short time. There are both small and large creeping varieties. There are four different size and shape patterns to choose from in your search for a different kind of rose.

Climbers and Ramblers

This is a group of roses that, if tied to a support, can be made to climb. There are two types: Ramblers with long, pliable stems, bearing large trusses of small flowers as a single summer flush and Climbers with stiff stems bearing flowers which are larger than Rambler blooms and may repeat flowering. Don't guess with Climbing roses. Choose carefully, plant properly and don't expect too much in the first year. Train stems to stimulate flowering and prune as directed.

Shrub Roses

The Shrub rose is a large group of Bush roses with only one feature in common. They are neither Hybrid Teas nor Floribundas. The typical Shrub rose is taller than a bedding rose and is a Species variety (related to a Wild rose), an old-fashioned variety (dating back to pre-Hybrid Tea days) or a Modern Shrub rose. Shrub roses are underestimated, under utilized and misunderstood. One of the problems is that they are not a clear-cut group. They are a rag-bag of varieties which do not belong in any of the other classes. Coming in all shapes and sizes, Shrub and landscape roses work well in any landscape. Landscape roses grow close to the ground like ground cover and have a spreading habit. Somewhere among this extremely varied class of roses is a variety for nearly every garden.

The reader might also want to look at English Style Roses or David Austin Roses, two very popular classes.



Christopher Marlowe, David Austin Shrub Rose

Tree Roses (Standards)

Tree roses are made up of a hardy rootstock grafted to a long stem that is, in turn, grafted to a rose bush at the top of the stem. The tree is a lovely addition to the garden, but extra care is needed to insure its survival over the winter. Some rosarians produce Tree Roses by letting the rootstock grow a long stem (the trunk), which is then cut off at the desired height (usually 30 to 36 inches) and the desired rose variety is grafted or budded at the top of the trunk.

Sources:

ARS, All America Rose Selections, Witherspoonroses, Santa Clara Valley Rose Society and Internet Explorer.

This article was written by Hugh Parrish for the Marion County Rose Society publication, [Growing Great Roses in Central Florida](#), Second Edition, 2010, Kathy Porter Editor. See page 10 for details on how you can obtain a copy.