

Introducing the

Canadian Shield™ Rose

Just in Time for Canada's 150th

By William Hrycan



Images courtesy Vineland
Research and Innovation Centre

A new rose is taking centre stage at this year's Canada Blooms flower and garden festival in Toronto—the Canadian Shield™ rose. Named after the ancient Canadian Shield formation that covers more than half of Canada, the new rose is being released in garden centres across the country in time for Canada's 150th anniversary.

The Canadian Shield rose is truly Canadian, possessing a refined beauty yet hardy enough to thrive in the diverse conditions found across our country.

Canadian Shield flowers are scarlet red and fully double. The 42 to 52 petals per flower give each bloom a full, lush appearance. Individual blossoms are large, averaging eight cm (3 in.) in diameter. Small clusters of flowers are produced all over the plant, appearing in heavy flushes from mid summer to autumn. The flowers are mildly fragrant, further setting them apart from many modern rose hybrids.

A versatile landscape plant, the Canadian Shield rose is a robust, compact shrub with an upright form that will grow up to 150 cm (5 ft.) tall and 120 cm (4 ft.) wide. The plants are bushy, with glossy green foliage that looks great all season long. Use it as a great feature specimen in a smaller garden or in a group planting, where you can take advantage of its superior ornamental qualities.

As the name suggests, the Canadian Shield rose is winter hardy across Canada to Zone 3. Like all roses that come out of the Vineland Research and Innovation Centre, it is disease resistant and will not succumb to black spot or powdery mildew.

For those familiar with rose classification, the Canadian Shield rose is a Floribunda rose. Floribundas share some ornamental floral characteristics with hybrid tea roses, but they produce flowers in long-blooming, large clusters rather than singly on long stems. Floribunda roses are typically hardier than hybrid tea roses, and the plants are generally fuller and more ornamental when not in bloom.

Officially named Rosa 'AAC576', the Canadian Shield rose is a recent cross that includes 'Frontenac', a hybrid shrub rose in the Explorer series known for extreme hardiness, long flowering season and disease resistance. Canadian Shield rose shares many of these characteristics. 'Frontenac' is such a strong

Shop Early!

New cultivars of any plant are often difficult to find the first few years after their introduction, but the Canadian Shield rose will hit garden centres across the country in full force this summer. The Vineland Research and Innovation Centre and the Canadian Nursery Landscape Association (CNLA) are so sure this rose will be a success, they have teamed up with more than 20 Canadian nurseries to propagate and grow 50,000 plants for gardeners and landscapers to plant in time for Canada Day 2017. The Canadian Shield rose is bound to be popular, and despite the large numbers promised, there's a good chance it will sell out quickly—get yours early!



performer that it is a breeding parent in many other recent Canadian roses, including the truly unique 'Never Alone' as well as 'Campfire' and 'Oscar Peterson', both part of the Canadian Artist Series.

Breeding Canadian Hardy Roses

When rose breeders at the Vineland Research Centre set out to breed the perfect rose for the Canadian market, they did their homework. They learned that home gardeners prefer roses with upright forms, bushy growth habits, green glossy leaves, strong resistance to common rose diseases and large, full, fragrant flowers with continuous bloom. The Canadian Shield rose earns full marks in all categories.

The Canadian Shield rose isn't the first success story from the breeders at Vineland, but the roots of its strong rose breeding program go much deeper than its relatively recent history might suggest. Many of the most loved Canadian roses, including the Explorer and Parkland series, were introduced by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's Hardy Rose Breeding Program based in Morden, Manitoba.

When this program was cancelled, much of the promising work was in danger of being lost. In 2010, the Canadian Nursery Landscape Association (CNLA) obtained rights to the stock, and in collaboration with the Vineland Research Centre in Ontario, continued the breeding program. The program now focuses on developing cold-hardy, disease-resistant roses specifically for the Canadian market,

but that will also be strong performers in international markets.

After only a handful of years in full operation, the program is seeing promising results. Every year, more than 15,000 hybrid roses are planted at the main farm in Vineland, Ontario. The most promising of these are sent to collaborators across the country, including a test garden at the University of Saskatchewan. By growing in a variety of conditions and climates, potential new roses are evaluated for their ornamental characteristics, disease resistance, winter hardiness and general performance across the country.

The Canadian Shield rose is the first in the new 49th Parallel series, a collection of roses developed by the Vineland Research Centre breeding program. We'll continue to highlight new cultivars in *The Gardener* as they are introduced.

If you're in Toronto for this year's Canada Blooms, March 10-19, treat yourself to a sneak preview of this exciting new rose. Even if you can't make it to the celebration, look for the Canadian Shield rose in garden centres across the country in time for Canada's 150th anniversary celebrations.

William Hrycan is The Gardener's horticultural editor as well as a frequent contributor. He's also a landscape architect, photographer, devoted dad and self-confessed gardening addict who gardens wherever and whenever he can.

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