

Rose bushes can be team players in your all-star garden

No longer is a rose bush part of a collection but are now part of a greater whole, integrated into landscapes that serve many purposes, Mark Cullen and Ben Cullen write.

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By Mark Cullen, Special to the Star and Ben Cullen



Gardeners no longer plant rose collections, they integrated rose, like this climbing rose, into landscapes to serve many purposes. (MARKCULLEN.COM)

Once the stars of the yard and kept in a collection unto themselves, rose bushes have become team players in modern garden design.

They are trusted perennials, and for generations a sunny yard included a rose garden. In the early days of Weall and Cullen Nurseries, our family business, customers would buy wagonloads of rose bushes each spring.

Canadians have not lost their love of the rose — they have shifted focus with modern garden design. No longer is a rose bush part of a collection but are now part of a greater whole, integrated into landscapes that serve many purposes. There are many myths that have grown around roses, among them insect and disease problems. We are here to dispel some myths and open your eyes to the

potential that roses may hold for you.

First, new roses are resistant to disease. It is a requirement for new rose introductions to be black spot- and powdery mildew-free because the changing demands of consumers calls for it.

If low-maintenance is a key feature for your when shopping for garden plants, consider these:



Oso Easy roses are very low maintenance, as their name suggests. (MarkCullen.com)

Oso Easy: These patented roses from the Proven Winners group are as disease resistant and ever-blooming as a rose can get. There are many flowering shrubs in the Proven Winners lineup, including hydrangeas, weigelas and more. All of them are thoroughly garden-tested before they go to market. They are well named. Mark has grown several varieties of Oso Easy roses in his 10-acre garden and he is very happy with the results. With over 50 roses, these are stand-outs. Varieties range in height from 50 centimetres (Paprika) to 120 centimetres (Urban Legend).



Knock Out roses are best suited for mass plantings with lots of colour. (MarkCullen.com)

Knock Out: Very winter hardy, Knock Out's do not require winterizing (mounding of soil around the base of the plant each autumn). This family is perhaps best suited for mass planting. Thinking of a hedge or an area in your garden where you want loads of colour? Knock Outs could do the job for you.

Five varieties range in size from one-metre high to 1-1/2 metres.



David Austin roses are bred to be fragrant and disease resistant. (MarkCullen.com)

David Austin: This one is Mark's favourite and he has four varieties of David Austins growing in his garden. Every one of them is exceptionally fragrant, fully double, disease resistant and an impressive addition to his extensive perennial collection.

Our favourites are Abraham Darby (apricot yellow, 1-1/2 metres) and Heritage (soft, clear pink 1-1/4 metres). Amazing when cut and brought indoors to enjoy.

Canadian Shield: This new introduction from Vineland Research and Innovation is a great new rose bush. A shrub rose, it matures to 125-centimetres high, has a soft, sweet fragrance and is extremely winter hardy.

When shopping for roses, be sure to look for "Canadian Grown" on the label. This is your assurance that the plants are acclimatized to our cold winters.

Plant in quality triple mix and add one-part worm castings to every 10 parts soil for the best performance.

Water well at the time of planting and throughout the season, try to keep moisture off the foliage when you hand water to avoid encouraging black spot and powdery mildew. Even on resistant varieties, it is best to be water wise.

Note that all roses require a minimum of six hours of sunshine per day to perform at their best.

Mark Cullen is an expert gardener, author, broadcaster, tree advocate and holds the Order of Canada. His son **Ben** is a fourth-generation urban gardener and graduate of University of Guelph and Dalhousie University in Halifax. Follow them at markcullen.com, @markcullengardening, on Facebook and bi-weekly on Global TV's Morning Show.

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