

Rose History and Propagation

Roses star in our summer garden. They fill the air with perfume and my heart with delight. Roses have a long history. They have changed over time from the original wild or species ones with single flowers. Natural mutations and ingenious breeding have led to a wide variety of forms and colours. Specimens of roses were said to have been brought back from the Holy Land at the time of the Crusades. Imagine a battle weary knight protecting a potted plant on his return journey, and then you can realise how special and precious such roses must have been to English and European eyes.

The earlier garden rose groups were the Gallica Roses, Damask Roses, Alba Roses and Centifolia Roses, all of which have many petals in a rosette, a shrubby bush form and flower once. Over time, new chance seedlings were cultivated and propagated. In the eighteenth century, particularly in France, there was a great boom in nurserymen setting out to breed new roses. A seed is the product of two parent plants, with the genes from both plants being represented in different combinations as the result of pollination. Breeders use hand pollination which allows for control over which parent plants contribute to a seed, and thus which characteristics could be shown in the seedlings.

Roses from China and the Ile de Bourbon near Mauritius were included in the mix. The ability to flower repeatedly throughout the summer was a feature of the China roses, which breeders sought to maintain. Another group of roses, the Tea Roses, resulted from crossing different China Roses, each of which had a tea-like scent. Hybrid is a term which, in the rose world, means to combine two different types of roses. Hybrid Tea Roses developed by crossing Tea Roses with a different type, the Hybrid Perpetual Roses.



Centifolia Rose



Rose 'Queen Elizabeth', the first Grandiflora, bred by Lammerts in 1954, a cross between a floribunda and a hybrid tea.

Australian rose breeders, such as Olive Fitzhardinge, Alistair Clark, Paul Hains and George Thomson, have worked on breeding roses especially suited to Australian conditions.

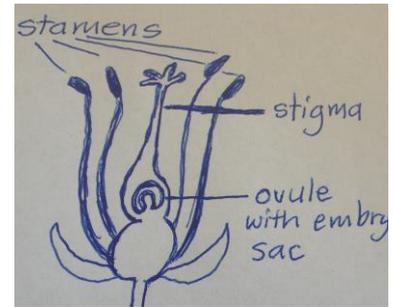
It was not until 1912 that Floribunda Roses were developed by P.T. Poulson, a Danish hybridist, who created a red rose with the name which is, in English, 'Red Riding Hood'. Floribundas are hardy repeat flowerers with large blooms and little fragrance. Climbers and ramblers were selected from large growing sports (seed grown plants).

Hybrid Musks, Rugosas and Modern Shrub Roses were developed in the 20th Century as garden roses. There has been a resurgence of interest in older roses since the 1940s and 1950s. Graham Thomas was the authority on old roses at the time. He created a collection of old roses, trawling gardens looking for varieties that were thought to have been lost. A little later, David Austin started experimenting with hybrids, using desirable characteristics from old and modern roses. He went on to create some outstanding roses which he called English Roses. Australian rose



Rose 'Graham Thomas', bred by David Austin

If you want to create a new variety of rose, propagate from seeds. For hand pollination, select a mother plant and a different variety for the father plant. Choose a $\frac{3}{4}$ open bloom on each. Take off all the petals. With sterile tweezers or nail scissors, take off all the stamens from the father plant bloom and drop them into a labelled open container. Take off the stamens from the mother plant bloom. Leave the stigma in the middle intact. 24 hours later, the yellow pollen grains should have been released into your container. Use a fine paint brush or your finger to dab the collected pollen from the father bloom onto the stigma of the mother bloom. Repeat twice at four hour intervals. Label the developing hip eg Centifolia X Queen Elizabeth.



Cross section with petals removed.

Remove the seeds from ripe hips (about four months after pollination, whether by bee or hand), clean them and place them in a zip lock bag of moist soil in the fridge for three to four months. Don't freeze them. This simulates a cold wet winter, and is called scarifying the seeds. In spring, plant the seeds in trays of well-drained seed-raising mix. Pot up seedlings as they grow. Roses take about four months from germination to flowering, with about 30% germination being normal. I am going to give this a go – who knows what will happen!

To propagate a rose exactly the same as its parent plant, grow it from a cutting. Take cuttings from new growth, or, in winter, from a pencil sized piece about 12 cm long. Dip the cuttings in a rooting hormone, then place them in a free draining mix and keep moist and out of strong light and heat. They should grow roots in a couple of months.

Happy gardening,
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