

Types of roses

The most popular rose class is, and has been for many years, the hybrid tea. A hybrid tea is generally a medium to tall growing shrub displaying the large pointed buds and high centered form that most people identify as a rose. Blooms are usually presented one to a stem or in small sprays of multiple blooms.

The **floribunda**, another form of modern rose, is so named because of an expectation that it will produce an abundance of blooms. Originally a floribunda was a cross of a hybrid tea with the multiple cluster-flowered low growing polyantha. The result was a relatively compact plant that produced an abundance of blooms in clusters, making a superb landscape specimen.

Many floribundas still meet this description. But the term has also become a description for a plant that produces hybrid tea form blooms that are too small for a hybrid tea. At the same time, rose introducers have been pushing the idea that a landscape rose is a shrub with the result that many obvious floribundas have now been introduced under the shrub label.

The **grandiflora** is a class adopted in the U.S originally to explain 'Queen Elizabeth', which has the size and large blooms of a hybrid tea but the flowering habit of a floribunda. The class has never gathered much favor and roses classed as grandifloras in recent years have proved a mixed bag of dissimilar roses which, with some exception (notably 'Gold Medal') have not proven to be favorites.

The **miniflora** is intermediate between the floribunda and miniature rose, both in the size of the bloom and of the bush. The class was added to the list of ARS approved horticultural classifications in 1999, and initial expectations were that it would accommodate the small floribunda-type bushes being introduced in Europe under names such as "patio" roses. In the U.S., however, it became an immediate favorite of exhibitors with the result being that the best minifloras are typically smaller versions of the hybrid tea. Smaller than a miniflora, the miniature rose typically has 1-inch blooms on perhaps a two-foot bush. As with all classes, there are variations, from the smallest miniature – sometimes referred to as a micro-miniature with grain-sized blooms to climbing miniature roses that grow ten feet tall.

I have long considered that classifying a rose as a "**shrub**" as about as useful as classifying it as a plant. Although the term is intended as a marketing term to imply a good landscape plant, the class has become a hodge-podge of dissimilar roses, ranging from climbers with single blooms, such as 'Sally Holmes', to cluster blooming shrublets like 'The Raven', disease-resistant landscape plants such as 'Knock Out', and the English Roses, which are arguably due a class of their own.

Climbers are well known to rose enthusiasts and gardeners alike, with their dramatic statement of color and the vertical interest they add to the garden. Roses of course, do not actually climb, in the sense of a plant like ivy that attaches itself to a wall with tendrils. Instead a climbing rose produces very long canes that must be trained to a structure, such as a wall or pergola.

The **polyantha** class was introduced in 1875 and traces to a rose known as Rosa multiflora 'Polyantha'. It shares many of the R. multiflora traits including its distinctive fringed stipules and the production of numerous blooms borne in panicles at the tops of branches. However, from the beginning polyanthas differed from R. multiflora in several important respects, the most important being its dwarf blooms, its dwarf bush form and its repeat blooming habit.

In a small effort to sort out the confused **shrub** class, a separate show category has been created for "classic shrubs", a term defined to include four family classifications, principally the hybrid rugosas and hybrid musks. Hybrid rugosas are rugged landscape roses with typically rough (rugose) foliage and the ability to survive in extreme conditions. Of most interest are the hybrid musks.

An "**Old Garden Rose**" is a rose either in existence, or from a class in existence, prior to 1867, the date of introduction of the supposed first hybrid tea, 'La France'. This covers a lot of ground and there are OGRs of every size and form, and that fit every garden application.

What to Buy

Roses perform differently in different environments and climate. It is therefore very important in selecting roses to learn how they perform in your immediate area. This is a main reason to belong to your local society. Also you should visit local public rose gardens to see how the roses you have in mind might perform. Mid-October is an excellent blooming time for roses in the San Diego area so consider a trip to the garden at Balboa Park, or those of your fellow society members – to see what is doing well this time of year.