Friday’s Feature
by
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The “Lady” of the Garden

The rose is a magnificent garden plant and is often called the “queen of the flowers.” Unfortunately, to keep many of them prosperous a strict program of spraying, fertilizing and pruning is essential. However, if you choose the right rose for the right purpose and place it in the right location, the payoff is well worth the effort.

Roses are among some of the most versatile plants in the landscape. Because of the wide variety of growth habits and sizes, roses are suitable for a range of garden situations. Use them as specimen plants, to cover a wall or drape gracefully on a porch. Roses can be grown in containers or be used as part of a shrub border. Choosing the right rose for your landscape situation is the key to success.

With so many roses to choose from, gardeners need to understand their classification system. Roses can generally be divided into two groups: species and cultivars. The cultivars are further divided into old garden roses and modern roses.

Species roses are usually described as those found growing in the wild. And if you are looking for a lower maintenance rose, then try a species rose. One that is well known in mild climates for its vigorous growth, its evergreen foliage and its usually thornless stems is the Lady Banks’ rose (Rosa banksiae).

The Lady Banks’ rose originated in China. In 1807 it was introduced to Kew, the Royal Botanical Gardens in England. It is named after Lady Dorothea Banks, the wife of Sir Joseph Banks, who was the director of Kew and a distinguished botanist.

The Lady Banks’ rose has small, dark green, glossy foliage. While some leaves may be lost during the winter, these are evergreen roses. Their clean, shiny foliage is handsome throughout the year and their spectacular spring flower display is remarkable.

Lady Banks’ roses typically flower only once a year in early spring. The flowers are in dense clusters and are small, only about one inch across. The flowers come in four forms: white or yellow, single or double.

The double yellow Lady Banks’ rose (Rosa banksiae ‘Lutea’) is probably the most popular in this group of roses. It is said to be the hardiest of the
This is a good rose for our area because it is tough. It requires no special insect and disease control measures and actually appears to thrive with neglect. It withstands full sun and partial shade and tolerates some salt spray.

Lady Banks’ roses are sprawling climbers and resist being restrained. It’s best to give this one plenty of room and let it ramble on a structure. It’s wonderful on arbors, fences, and pergolas.

According to the Guinness’ Book of World Records, the largest tree bush in the world is a Lady Banks’ rose. Growing in Tombstone, Arizona it covers an area of over 8,000 square feet.

**Tip of the Week:** House plants could use some rejuvenation by this time of year. Most of them are of tropical origin, preferring higher humidity and warmer temperatures than are present in most homes during the winter.

By April many house plants, though still green, are often simply in a survival mode. Help them to overcome "cabin fever" by performing a few simple tasks: gently wash their leaves with a mild soap solution, move them to a brighter location, repot if necessary and give them a light fertilization.

Theresa Friday is the Residential Horticulture Extension Agent for Santa Rosa County. The use of trade names in this article is solely for the purpose of providing specific information. It is not a guarantee, warranty, or endorsement of the product name(s) and does not signify that they are approved to the exclusion of others.