

Roses and Fragrance

by Sharon Radice Moore, Past President Desert Rose Society

I love to watch visitors in a rose garden. Each person has his or her own unique approach to the individual bushes; some stand back; others lean forward, and some circle the bush slowly and carefully. You will see admiration, if not adoration, of color, bloom size, number of petals, foliage, health, growth, and the mysterious, often mythical catalyst of “scent memories” - FRAGRANCE.

Roses secrete fragrance (often referred to as volatile oils) from glands on the lower petal surfaces (and leaf surfaces as with *R.eglanteria*) and the bristly glands of moss roses. Genetics, sunshine (duration and intensity), temperature, humidity, soil pH, water, wind, time of day, and disease (mildew can cause a loss of scent) are all factors in the production of fragrance. Warm sunny weather releases the maximum amount of volatile oils. Humidity helps prolong the scent by reducing the rate of evaporation. However, wind and too much intense sunlight can have the opposite effect.

While there are few components in our veneration of the rose more compelling than fragrance, our individual olfactory senses perceive it differently, even in intensity, making it difficult to rate with any clarity. However, like wine, rose fragrance has identifiable scents and combinations. N.F. Miller classified them into seven basic scents: rose (classic old garden), nasturtium, orris (iris root) or tea, apple, lemon, violet and clove. However, there are also other citrus notes (orange, grapefruit), more floral (magnolia, lily of the valley, hyacinth, marigold, sweet pea), some additional fruits (raspberry, banana, apricot, quince, melon, currants), greenery (clover, green tea, parsley, fern, moss), musk, linseed oil, honey, ginger, and myrrh.

In addition, color appears to play an important role in determining fragrance. Purplish roses are believed to be better for fragrance as a group than others. Often red and pink roses exude an old garden rose scent, while yellows and whites have tea, nasturtium, violet and lemon in common. Orange shades, often described as spicy and fruity, have notes of tea, nasturtium, violet, and lemon.

Generally, darker roses with many heavy petals and a velvety sheen will prove more fragrant than those with lighter tones and fewer petals. However, any rose on a warm and sunny morning when it is one-quarter to two-thirds open, will be its most fragrant and enjoyable.

Also, some entire classifications of roses are renowned for fragrance: Noisettes, Hybrid Rugosas, English Roses, Damasks, Hybrid Perpetuals, and Hybrid Gallicas make up this group. Of course there are some within each classification that are considered “most fragrant” and others simply “fragrant.”

Considering the many factors involved in determining the world's most fragrant roses, anyone can see that it is a daunting task. However, there are many national and international organizations that have taken on the challenge and award medals or bestow honorable designations upon their choices.

The roses listed below have received one of these honors (or are deserving of such honor.) I urge you to visit HelpMeFind.com/Roses to learn more about them and where they can be purchased. As well, inquiring of Consulting Rosarians, other rose gardeners, and nurseries in your area can also give you some insight into what might prove to be the "most fragrant" in your garden. I warn you, this can lead to some very thorny discussions!

Angel Face F (m)	Mister Lincoln HT (dr)
Charlotte Rampling HT (dr)	Molineaux S (dy)
Chrysler Imperial HT (dr)	Neil Diamond HT (pb)
City of London F (lp)	Papa Meilland HT (dr)
Compassion LCl (op)	Paul Shirville HT (op)
Crimson Glory HT (dr)	Perdita S (ab)
Double Delight HT (rb)	Pristine HT (w)
Elizabeth of Glamis FL (op)	Regatta HT (lp)
Elle HT (pb)	Rosemary Harkness HT (op)
Evelyn S (ab)	Royal Amethyst HT (m)
Falling in Love HT (pb)	Sally's Rose HT (pb)
Firefighter HT (dr)	Scentimental F (rb)
Fourth of July LCl (rb)	Scepter'd Isle S (lp)
Fragrant Cloud HT (or)	Secret HT (pb)
Fragrant Delight F (op)	Sheer Bliss HT (w)
Fragrant Plum Gr (m)	Sheila's Perfume F (yb)
Frederic Mistral HT (lp)	Silver Star HT (m)
Gertrude Jekyll S (mp)	Sugar Moon HT (w)
Granada (Donatella) HT (rb)	Sun Sprinkles Min (dy)
Honey Perfume F (ab)	Sunsprite F (dy)
Jardins de Bagatelle HT (w)	Sutter's Gold HT (ob)
Jude the Obscure S (my)	Sweet Chariot Min (m)
Lady Emma Hamilton S (ob)	Tiffany HT (pb)
Lamarque N (w)	Toulouse-Latrec HT (my)
Louise Estes HT (pb)	Valencia HT (ab)
Melody Parfumée Gr (m)	Velvet Fragrance HT (dr)
Memorial Day HT (mp)	Wild Blue Yonder Gr (m)
Midas Touch HT (dy)	Yves Piaget HT (mp)

Symbol Guide: F-Floribunda Gr-Grandiflora HT-Hybrid Tea
LCl-Large-flowered Climber Min-Miniature N-Noisette S-Shrub

Color Guide:

ab - apricot & apricot blend
dr - dark red
dp - deep pink
dy - deep yellow
lp - light pink
ly - light yellow
m - mauve & mauve blend
mp - medium pink
mr - medium red
my - medium yellow
ob - orange & orange blend
op - orange-pink & orange-pink blend
or - orange-red & orange-red blend
rb - red blend
r - russet
w - white, near white & white blend
yb - yellow blend