

TRY GROWING A RUGOSA ROSE

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For Print January 22, 2010

Gardeners who love roses probably plant the more common grandifloras, hybrid teas, floribundas and climbing varieties, but rugosas are another type to consider for the landscape. You can't get a hardier rose anywhere!

The rugosa rose is generally described as a perennial, deciduous subshrub. Species rugosas originated in Asia, with many hybrids being introduced since. Rugosa roses have their most active growth period in the spring and summer, with greatest bloom in mid-spring and summer. The foliage is dark green and wrinkled in appearance, and the stems are densely covered with thorns. Rugosa roses have a long life span relative to most other plant species and a moderate growth rate. At maturity, the typical rugosa rose will reach up to 5' feet in height. The 2-3" in diameter flowers will range in color from white to purple, with many being quite fragrant. The flowers give rise to tomato-like hips as fall approaches, which make for wonderful fall and winter interest. Rugosas also reproduce quite readily from seeds within the hips.

The rugosa rose's value as an erosion control plant includes sand dune stabilization because of its ability to withstand salt spray. This, of course, is not a factor in El Dorado County, but slopes and hillsides in our area can be made more stable by planting rugosas. These wonderful roses do need well drained soil, however, with lots of organic matter added. After planting, water them well until they are established, and then only once a week or so during summer. Unlike other types of roses, rugosas have a high tolerance to drought and restricted water conditions. However, their leaves do burn very readily, so feeding with time-released fertilizers in late spring is best. Mulching around the base of the plant with organic matter is also recommended.

General maintenance and care involve periodically removing older stems to improve the rugosa's appearance. This plant remains fairly free of the diseases and insects that affect other roses, except occasionally an infestation of aphids. If this occurs, simply hose them off the plant with a strong spray of water.

If a rugosa rose is a plant you think you might like to try in your landscape, some of the more popular hybrids to look for are the white-blooming 'Blanc Double de Coubert' or the purplish red-blooming 'Hansa.' If they cannot be found in local nurseries, personnel will frequently place special orders for customers; just ask.

If this whets your appetite for more information, plan to attend the UCCE Master Gardener class tomorrow on "Roses." It will be held in the Placerville Main Library at 345 Fair Lane in Placerville, but please note that the starting time is 12:30 p.m. rather than in the morning. Master Gardeners are also available to answer rose or other home gardening topic questions Tuesday through Friday, 9 a.m. to noon, by calling (530) 621-5512. The office is located at 311 Fair Lane in Placerville.