

My Favorite Rose (Jul-1-2005)

By: Herb Zipper, Rose Breeder, Horticultural Judge, Consulting Rosarian

One of the most common questions asked of Rosarians is “What is your favorite rose?” Some will answer that it is the rose they are looking at that very moment; others will say it is the one that won a blue ribbon or took Queen of Show. Of course that is not what the inquirers want to know. They want to know which rose gives you the most pleasure and, if possible, will always be in your garden.

Over a span of thirty years we have grown a great number of different roses and our interests have changed. From growing climbers for massive display, to concentrating on exhibiting roses in shows, and to hybridizing, each change brought different favorites, some of which still reside in our garden.

About 15 years ago I began to move away from the heavy chemical spraying program I had been using. It wasn't long before I stopped using insecticides and then went to a minimal use of fungicides. As a result many of my roses died. Searching for varieties that were disease resistant, productive and lovely, I discovered “Carefree Beauty” hybridized by Griffith Buck and “Carefree Delight” and “Carefree Wonder” hybridized by Meiland. They are all pink, very winter-hardy and disease resistant. All three produce loads of blooms and grow into big shrubs. “Delight” is a single, “Beauty” is just doubled and “Wonder” is a little more doubled. If I had to choose from these three, my choice would be “Carefree Beauty.” With the exception of fragrance, it is everything you would want in a rose.

Make a bed 24” x 6” and buy six “Carefree Beauty” plants on their own roots from a nursery such as Kedem. In three to four seasons you will have a magnificent hedge of beautiful pink blooms. The past few winters have been rough and yet my plants – without protection – look as though they had spent the winter in a greenhouse!

If you decide to grow all three varieties, keep “Carefree Delight” in its own bed away from other plants because it tends to throw very long canes. A mixed bed of “Wonder” and “Beauty” will also be quite appealing!

Of course, if ten years from now, you ask the same question I may tell you about this new, fragrant, almost dark blue rose that is always in bloom – it never stresses my back – and its plastic stems never seem to require pruning!