

Try The New Disease-Resistant Varieties To Reduce Pesticide Use

By: April Gonzales, Landscape Architect, Writer and Broadcast Commentator

Aside from location, the varieties you choose to grow make a big difference in whether to spray or not to spray. Traditionally, roses were hybridized for color, flower size, petal count and repetition of bloom. Blue was only achieved with dye or spray paint! But now a different sensibility is moving through the rose companies and disease resistance is the main focus of a lot of scientists' efforts.

Old standards that survive on neglect and a few experiments with new varieties is one way to reduce chemical use. "Betty Prior" can last a lifetime even if neglected. I am somewhat tired of "The Fairy" and "Bonica" and I continue to love "Seafoam", because it makes a great climber. I have ignored my "Eden", which is draped across the southern window bank, and it flourishes without any spraying, while others have perished.

Newer varieties have almost no fungal problems but you have to like their form. They are developed for landscape plantings rather than traditional rose gardens, but don't exclude them. Experiment a little bit, and see how to get great results with a little less effort and healthier soil.

"Carefree Wonder" and "Carefree Beauty" have probably already found their way into your garden; the flowers are really gorgeous and go with anything else in the landscape. Carpet roses definitely need little care but have a specific purpose. Mass plantings that need very little maintenance – even in terms of deadheading – are not always to everyone's taste.

Bailey Nurseries is presently marketing a new series of roses for the landscape that helps bridge the gap between healthy foliage and traditional hybrid tea-like blooms, some of which are fragrant. Their ultimate goal is to produce a rose that performs like a Spirea and could survive if planted in front of a gas station! To test their new varieties they sprayed them with black spot tea. These plants were developed to grow on their own root stock so that if they die back completely in a hard Zone 4 winter, then the plant would come back true to form from the root.

"Carefree Beauty" is the parent to some of the roses in the Garden Art Series by Bailey, one of which is "Grandma's Blessing". They consider this deep pink, hybrid tea-like bloom to be a good replacement for "Queen Elizabeth". "Kiss Me" has a gorgeous salmon bloom that is fragrant; it would go with almost any color in the garden. "Salmon Impressionist" caught my eye in a rose display – a classic form with a great color – it would be a good substitute for "Tropicana".

"Tahitian Moon" may be added to complement my climbing "Eden", although it can also be treated as a shrub ranging from two to six feet in height. It is a shrub ranging from two to six feet in height. It is a light yellow that pales out to white and has the traditional cabbage form that is fuller than "Graham Thomas". "Centennial" has a more traditional pointed bud that starts out apricot-yellow and fades to cream. It grows two to three feet high with recurrent blooms. "Mystic Fairy" is the offspring of "The Fairy" rose. It is a red that fades to burgundy and is supposed to be constantly in bloom.

The three-inch flowers have pink in them. True to lineage it grows to three feet in height. It is part of the Garden Path Series that includes "Little Mischief". I did not see this rose in

bloom, but I would risk money on it. This rose has the same form and continual bloom pattern as “Mystic Fairy” but is a deep pink with paler casts that fade to white. I think that both of these plants surpass “Bonica” and “The Fairy” in color, and it will be interesting to see if they are tougher than their parent plants.

Bailey’s breeder was inspired by Bill Radler’s “Knock Out” series, which are petite roses with tiny pointed buds. I planted two dozen last year and am looking forward to seeing how they bloom. If “Queen Elizabeth” looks like stalks in August, then I may give “Grandma’s Blessing” a try, but some of the other new varieties like “Tahitian Moon” and “Mystic Fairy” are so enticing, it would be worth making room for them anywhere in the garden to see if they live up to the claims of clean glossy foliage and disease resistance. Bailey grows their roses in Oregon and tests them there and in Minnesota for disease resistance and root hardiness. Their main advice is – a healthy, well-fed rose fights black spot by developing a thick cuticle on the leaf and stem.