

Green rose is always a winner

Have you ever seen a green rose? Yes, there is such a flower growing among the large rose collection of Frank Von Koss of Birmingham. This green rose, *R. chinensis viridis*, looks like a regular rose in bud form, until it opens with a green bloom. Von Koss says that it is always a winner in rose shows.

Even if he didn't grow a green rose, this roselarian has won local, state and national awards. He has been a judge on the national level and is now a Lifetime Consulting Rosarian to the American Rose Society. Founder of the Metropolitan Rose Society, he is currently president of the Great Lakes District of the American Rose Society.

The garden flourishes with more than 500 hybrid teas, grandifloras, floribundas and old fashioned shrub roses. One, a centifolia more than 100 years old, was in his grandfather's garden. The colors are just magnificent and the fragrance is heavenly.

His interest in roses began 35 years ago and now single roses such as Chinese red Oriental Charm, pink Dainty Bess and Windchimes, white Snow Cream and White Wings and coffee-colored Juliet's Rose reside in splendor with red Big Ben and John Waterer, Moo Cherle and Uncle Joe, with foliage that cups up.

Others with orange, salmon, lavender (Madame Violet), yellow

(lime light) and even striped roses such as Marblehead and a show rose, Canadian White Star, live in harmony with a pink rose he hybridized, Lady Katherine named after his daughter.

When one grows a new hybrid the name has to be registered, as is this one. His roses adorn the neighbors yards on either side of a fence around the garden and the park at the rear.

To create a rose of show quality, the two buds or eyes on either side of the stem must be rubbed out so that the center bloom will be of superior quality. If this isn't done, the two side shoots will bloom first and begin to fade before the center blossom opens. It takes a trained eye to see the buds as they are forming on either side of the main stem, but Von Koss is an expert. When a rose is being grown for competition, he knows just what steps to take to make it a winner.

When I asked him which rose is a favorite, he replied, "Ask me at different times — it varies — sometimes they're so pretty they'll knock your socks off."

The best time to plant a rose, according to this gentleman, is in the spring. However, if one is to be transplanted, fall is the ideal time since they are dormant. A rose is dormant when the temperature reaches 28 degrees, so the tremendous task of putting the roses to bed for the winter begins around Thanksgiving. Roses are pruned and covered with rose cones or with a cold frame system that Von Koss builds. Tender roses such as the green one and Royal Highness (both are china roses) and others, are buried, potted and all, in the ground for winter hibernation. They are laid on their sides, without pruning, for the duration.

When disease strikes a rose, Von Koss, a teacher and lecturer, sometimes lets it progress so he can take pictures of it to discuss in his classes, so that the students can see firsthand what he is talking about.

Most roses in this country are grafted to multiflora understock. To graft a rose, a T cut is made on the stem of the understock and the eye is cut out of another rose (the area on the stem from which the leaves emerge), and they are joined together with banding rubber. The following year all growth above the budded area is cut off and a new plant develops.

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The Sands

down to earth

Marty Figley

ops. A new rose which a friend budded for Von Koss, Nightingale, shows great promise for being a superior specimen.

We discussed rose hips and I learned that if the hips, or seed pods, are cut off after the bloom, the rose will continue to produce blossoms. If the hips are left on the plant the growth will go to the seeds.

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