

ENGLISH ROSES – A PERFECT CHOICE FOR GARDEN DECOR

TRANDAFIRII ENGLEZEȘTI – O ALEGERE PERFECTĂ PENTRU DECORUL GRĂDINII

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Abstract. *Out of the multitude of rose varieties that we are enjoying today, English roses stand out not only for the diversity of their shapes but especially for their delicate and highly fragrant flowers. They combine the graceful style of old 19th-century roses with brightly coloured petals and the elegance of modern varieties. Most of them bloom repeatedly and abundantly, being appreciated by those who love the nostalgic timeless look of old-fashioned roses. English roses are very versatile, having been created to be adaptable to a wide range of plant compositions, in which, the abundance of flowers and their intense fragrance have a remarkable impact. This paper analyses the behaviour of several varieties of English roses for their appropriate use in various landscaping arrangements.*

Key words: English roses, romantic garden, landscape design, fragrant roses

Rezumat. *Din multitudinea de soiuri de trandafiri de care ne bucurăm astăzi, grupul trandafirilor englezești atrage atenția nu doar prin diversitatea taliei ci mai ales prin florile lor delicate, extrem de parfumate. Aceștia combină stilul grațios al trandafirilor vechi din secolul al XIX lea, plini de petale viu colorate, cu cel elegant, al soiurilor moderne. Cei mai mulți înfloresc repetat și abundent, ceea ce îi face să fie apreciați de cei care iubesc aspectul nostalgic, atemporal al trandafirilor de modă veche. Trandafirii englezești sunt foarte versatili fiind creați pentru a fi adaptabili într-o gamă largă de compoziții vegetale, în care abundența florilor și parfumul lor intens vor avea un impact deosebit. Lucrarea de față analizează comportamentul câtorva soiuri de trandafiri englezești în vederea utilizării lor adecvate în diverse amenajări peisagere.*

Cuvinte cheie: trandafiri englezești, grădină romantică, design peisager, trandafiri parfumați

INTRODUCTION

English roses form a relatively new group of roses that first came to the forefront in the 1970s when the first created varieties were launched on the

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market. David Austin, who was the creator of this class of roses, wanted to combine the best traits of traditional roses which that had existed before 1867 with those of such modern species as *hybrid tea* and *polyantha*. Although these combinations were initially seen as odd, the outcome was a real success (Wagner, 2010). As a result, the new roses combine the delicate charm and strong fragrance of traditional roses and a wide range of colours and repeated flowering of modern roses. A specific feature of this class is that it includes roses of different strength, ranging from the smallest, container-size to climbers with bushy growth or graceful arching (Wagner, 2002). English roses are highly adaptable, having a beautiful and healthy appearance. Some of them also tolerate partial shade. They also exhibit good disease resistance. It is a wide range in terms of strength and colour, making them ideal for mixed beds, rose gardens, hedges, pots, or large planters. They quickly form compact bushes with branched growth and spectacular flowers with many petals. They are viewed as one of the best climbing roses in the world, full of beautiful flowers and foliage right at the base.

Some varieties bloom in successive waves, or even continuously, providing a colourful and fragrant show from the end of May until October. No other group of flowers can rival with the variety of scents of English roses. They have a unique fragrance, bringing not only rare garden scents of old roses but also highly pleasant scents of tea roses, fruity notes, musk, and myrrh.

The ‘Constance Spry’ (*AUSfirst*, *AUStance*) was the first released English rose from this group, a vigorous bush with a strong growth and generous foliage spreading a strong myrrh fragrance (fig.1). (<https://www.gardenia.net/plant/rose-constance-spry-ausfirst>).



Fig. 1. ‘Constance Spry’ Rose

(<https://www.gardenia.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/rose-constance-spry-ausfirst.webp>)

It is a highly popular shrub that has been awarded numerous prestigious awards, including the Award of Garden Merit of the Royal Horticultural Society.

Since then, over 150 other delightful varieties have been created with traditional nostalgic flowers in warm colours and with pleasant fragrances that have captivated the world (Wagner, 2010).

The study aims to describe the features of English roses by monitoring the behaviour of some varieties that entered the Romanian market to be able to make proper recommendations for their use in landscaping projects.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The study material comprises the Graham Thomas (AUSmas), Abraham Lincoln (AUScot), Mary Rose (AUSmary), and Othello (AUSlo) English rose varieties created by David Austin.

Used research methods: literature review, systematic observation, analysis and summary of results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The 'Graham Thomas' (AUSmas) English rose launched on the market in 1983. It appeared from the crossbreeding of the 'Iceberg' white floribunda and of unnamed seedling with the 'Charles Austin' shrub rose (fig.2). The variety was named after Graham Thomas, the legendary British horticulturist and restorer of old roses who was one of the most influential gardeners of his time (<https://eu.davidaustinroses.com/products/graham-thomas>).



Fig.2. Graham Tomas rose (the original)

The bushes are dense and compact that may reach an average height of around 1.2 - 1.5 meters and a similar width. The foliage of dark green colour is rich and resilient.

The buds of the 'Graham Thomas' English rose are usually of golden yellow colour with a slight hint of orange or beige and medium to large in size.

They are generally full, almost round, with a velvety texture, turning into big (10 cm) cup-shaped flowers with slightly wavy petals (around 35 petals) and an intense and sweet fragrance as they open up. These are produced either singly or in large clusters, with 3 to 9 flowers. The flowers have a short lifespan, but blooming occurs in waves throughout the growing

season. As the flowers open up and mature, the colour turns from intense yellow-orange to pale yellow. The foliage is healthy and smooth green. It is highly resistant to diseases (<https://www.helpmefind.com/rose/l.php?l=2.1839.1>).

The rose was awarded the "Award of Garden Merit" by the Royal Horticultural Society in 1993 and was included into the Rose Hall of Fame as the "World's Favourite Rose" (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rosa_Graham_Thomas). The almost continuous blooming makes it possible to have on the plant flowers in all stages from buds to faded flowers simultaneously, giving it a natural, nostalgic, timeless appearance (fig.2). It is an excellent choice for creating a central point in a garden.

The 'Abraham Darby' (AUScot) rose appeared in 1985 after the crossing of 'Aloha' (cl. hybrid tea, Boerner 1949) and 'Yellow Cushion' varieties (fig.3). It was named Abraham Darby, the builder of the first iron bridge which is located less than 15 km from David Austin's nurseries (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rosa_%27Abraham_Darby%27)



Fig. 3. The 'Abraham Darby' Rose (the original)

A vigorous shrub, ranging in height from 1.2 to approximately 3.0 meters and width of up to 1.5 meters, with upright and then arching branches, and a healthy and compact appearance. The leaves are dark green and glossy. The flowers are full, large, heavy, with over 40 petals (even up to 70), releasing an intense, fruity scent. The flower colour is a blend of yellow, pink, and apricot. As flowers mature, the colour of their petals fades. Also, the climate and age of the plant may influence the colour of the flower. It blooms prolifically, staggered throughout the growing season. The foliage is dense and glossy green. Overall, it is a resilient rose, but it may sometimes be affected by rust (<https://www.helpmefind.com/gardening/l.php?l=2.21>.)

The variety could be used as a single specimen or in groups for various landscaping designs, and as a container plant. Plus, it is suitable as a cut flower.

The ‘Mary rose’ (AUSmary) is the result of crossing the ‘Wife of Bath’[®] and ‘The Miller’ (fig. 4 a.) varieties. It appeared in 1983, being named after „Mary Rose”, a warship built for Henry the VIII, launched in 1511 and sank at Solent in 1545 (<https://www.helpmefind.com/rose/l.php?l=2.2085.1>).

A compact-growing shrub blooming unusually regularly throughout the entire summer. It produces attractive deep pink flowers, with big and full petals (26-40), growing in small clusters in a cupped bloom form. Its strong delightful fragrance is reminiscent of old roses, with a hint of honey and almond flower. Its foliage is of medium density and is smooth green. It may reach a height between 1.2 to 1.5 meters, its width ranging from 0.9 to 1.5 meters.



Fig. 4. a.), b.) The ‘Mary Rose’ and ‘Othello’ Roses (the original)

The ‘Othello’ (AUSlo) Rose was created in 1986 by crossing the ‘Lilian Austin’ × ‘The Squire’[®] varieties (fig. 4 b.), being named after the Othello tragedy written by William Shakespeare. The ‘Othello’ is a traditional English rose from any perspective, with big flowers, a strong scent of old roses and a generous blooming (<https://www.helpmefind.com/rose/l.php?l=2.2185>). The massive cup-shaped flowers filled with dark purple petals are mixed with a variety of light red shades. As flowers mature, their colour turns into violet. It grows tall and strong, with dark smooth foliage and many thorns. It is a striking and unusual rose blooming throughout the season. It can reach heights of 1.05 to over 2.0 m and widths of 0.9 to 1.85 m. It may be affected by mold.

Another specific feature of most English roses lies in the fact that when their flowers start fading, they gradually drop their petals, creating a carpet of petals at the base of the bush. This adds a pleasant and romantic touch. The appearance of the bush is not altered, which is extremely important when aiming to maintain consistently high aesthetics throughout the growing season. Therefore, the removal of faded flowers may be done

later and not immediately when garden owners or caretakers have the time or in line with the schedule.

CONCLUSIONS

1. English roses are a distinct group within the category of park roses, noted by the nostalgic shape of their flowers, colour, and mainly the fragrance.

2. The range of English roses is wide, therefore they could be used as individual plants or in groups for hedges, as well as in mixed compositions, large pots, or in containers.

3. The delicate manner in which the fading flowers gradually drop, without altering the decorative appearance of the bush, makes English roses a good choice for garden decor, especially for romantically-themed gardens.

4. The ‘Graham Thomas’ and the ‘Abraham Darby’ roses are excellent varieties for creating a point of attraction in a garden. When planted together, ‘Mary rose’ and the ‘Othello’ rose enhance each other, creating vibrant borders alongside other decorative species.

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