

## In praise of roses



A ROSE IS A ROSE – OR IS IT? Asks Wendy Downing, past president of the Canadian Rose Society. Most Canadian gardeners have spent the last couple of months looking through seed catalogues and plant lists in anticipation of finally getting outside and working in our gardens. Most gardeners I know have at least one rose bush in their gardens. Finding good quality plants is becoming increasingly difficult. You can imagine my delight when I recently received brochures from Canadian suppliers (Veseys and Botanus) with many roses offered for sale. I practically swooned to receive the David Austin catalogue from the U.S. with the notice advising that we no longer were required to obtain costly sanitary certificates in order to obtain a multitude of fragrant roses from south of the border.

Much to my chagrin after reading the fine print, I realized that most of these roses are grafted on Dr. Huey root stock. "Who or what is Dr. Huey?", you may well ask. Dr. Huey is a type of rose found in abundance in the United States. It came into widespread use as root stock after many of the states decided that *Rosa multiflora* was a noxious weed — so hardy that it became a nuisance and growers were no longer able to use it.

Most roses grafted to Dr. Huey will not survive the winters in Canada. If you purchase these plants, be prepared to replace them next year. If you are lucky, and the winter mild with adequate snow cover, you may get another year or two out of them.

When looking to purchase roses, might I suggest that you search out growers in Canada who are producing root roses or roses grafted to *R. multiflora* rootstock? Several suppliers that come to mind are Pickering Nurseries, Gardenimport, Hortico, J.C. Bakker, and Enderlein Nurseries in Ontario. Gardenimport sells roses from David Austin nurseries in Great Britain which are grafted to *Rosa laxa* which will survive in Southern Ontario as well as other areas of Canada.. There are a number of other nurseries throughout the country that sell roses by mail order. Information with respect to suppliers in your area can be found on the Canadian Rose Society website at [www.canadianrosesociety.org](http://www.canadianrosesociety.org).

A word to the wise before you buy — read the catalogue to see which hardiness zone the plants are recommended for. Ask the salespeople at your local nursery where their roses came from and what root stock was used. Know your zone and your garden. If you have a fenced or walled garden, the micro climate created by the sheltering walls will allow you to try plants that are slightly "out of zone". Plant the rose in well drained soil with the bud union several inches below grade in an area of your garden that gets six to eight hours of sun per day. Roses like lots of water, but do not like wet feet.

I hope this doesn't discourage you from trying roses in your garden. For those in colder climates, try the winter hardy roses introduced by Agriculture Canada. The Parkland and Explorer Series roses have been tested in zones 2 and 3 and will survive in most areas of the country with minimal or no winter protection.