

Lavant Horticultural Society

'Roses Grow on You'

Wed 8th February 2023

a talk by Liz Sawday of Apudram Roses

Now is the perfect, and traditional, time to plant bare root roses. However, now also comes the time for Apudram Roses to start potting up roses for sale in 4 litre rose pots. Liz showed an example of a potted rose plant, with a much more restricted root system, so that it can be fitted in the pot. Therefore, it is recommended to leave a rose bought as potted plant in the pot until it starts to grow new leaves to give time for the roots to grow.

Pruning:

Best done when you are in a bad mood, for it needs to be done aggressively. It must be done by hand. Using a hedge trimmer on extensive areas of rose plants may save time, but it will leave damaged cuts encouraging die-back and spread tiny pieces of the plants all over the place, carrying with them diseases and pests.

Vigorous pruning is needed to encourage strong basal shoots.

In recent years the traditional types of **hybrid tea** and **floribunda** have merged into a more general type of **bush rose**. These should be pruned back to 4 – 6" from the bud union (where the rose has been grafted onto the rootstock).

On old unpruned roses this pruning should be done by half in the first year, followed by the second half the following year.

Roses don't last for ever: hybrid teas and floribundas will should perform well for 15-20 years and then need replacing.

Ramblers:

Ramblers are more vigorous and mostly only flower once a year. They flower on the previous year's growth and therefore need to be pruned in the autumn, taking out old wood and tying in the new.

Climbers:

Climbers are more easy to train and repeat flower. They flower on the current season's growth. If the stems are allowed to grow straight up they will just flower at the top. Therefore, stems should be tied in to grow as horizontally as possible. The stem will then produce vertical shoots that will carry the flowers. Alternatively, the basal stems (i.e. coming up from the bud union) can be trained in a fan shape where this is more appropriate.

Ground cover:

These can provide excellent ground cover, especially for banks and to hide manhole covers etc. Prune in the spring, cutting out old wood, working out from the centre.

Shrub roses:

if you like its current size, prune it back by one third to one half. It should then grow back to its original size. If you prune it back much more it will still be fine, it will just be smaller.

Liz recommended 'Gold Leaf' gloves for pruning roses as they give good protection against the spines, extending up over the wrist, whilst becoming supple enough to give good feel.

A good pair of secateurs is essential. Liz recommend Felco as the best – although very expensive (£50-70) they can be sent back to Felco for complete refurbishing for about £25, extending their life indefinitely.

While pruning, blades should be wiped with white spirit to disinfect them and prevent the spread of diseases.

Feeding:

Roses are voracious feeders and poor flowering is most often down to lack of nutrients. Feed with bone meal in winter for root growth, then from spring with a good quality specific rose fertiliser (not just a general high-potassium feed which will not contain all the other specific nutrients). This can be applied as a granular feed – a liquid feed is also good, but only in summer when the rose is in full growth.

Liz very strongly recommended 'Uncle Tom's Rose Tonic', which can be applied as a foliar spray or drench.

Dead-heading:

Do not just take off the spent flower. Instead, cut back by 5 leaves. This will promote better re-flowering by creating stronger stems.

Powdery mildew:

This is caused by dryness at the roots. With roses this happens particularly when grown against sunny walls. It is best to give a good drench with water in the morning. Watering late in the day encourages blackspot. Roses are very thirsty – about 5 litres of water a week. Rain water is best, especially for newly planted roses. If this is not available, leave tap water outside in a bucket for a few hours to let the chlorine dissipate.

Propagating roses:

This is done in summer. Apuldram Roses now only produces 5,000 new plants on site – the other 20,000 are produced for them by a reliable grower in Cornwall.

The rootstock used is *Rosa laxa*, a widely used rootstock not prone to suckering. One bud from the variety being propagated is slid into a T cut made in the rootstock and then held in place with a patch. This is done by professional budders who can do up to 4,000 a day and are paid per bud. This will take 18 months to 2 years to develop into a commercial plant.

Varieties:

It is only possible to produce a small fraction of the vast number of varieties that exist. The varieties that are propagated have to follow fashion, so that they can then meet demand. Blue roses (or as close as you can get) are popular – 'Blue Moon' is still in demand and a good recent blue variety is 'Blue for You'.

Awards also help set the fashion, such as Rose of the Year and Gold Standard.

Suckers:

Suckers will always start from below the bud union and are usually brighter green and matt. However, the old wives' tale that a seven-lobed leaf is indicative of a sucker is not true, as sometimes the true rose could have such a leaf.

Do not just cut off a sucker – this will just make it more vigorous, as it would normal rose growth. Suckers should be twisted and broken off.

Planting:

Bare root roses should be planted so that the bud union is level with the soil or fractionally below.

“Rose replant disease”. This is not a disease, it is rather that the old rose has formed a strong partnership with the other things living in the soil, such as nematodes and mycorrhizal fungi. When a new rose is introduced it cannot compete and is rejected.

One solution is to take out the old soil, down to a depth of 18”, best done in autumn to leave site fallow over winter, and then put in new soil in the spring to plant the new bare root rose, sprinkling ‘Rootgrow’ on the roots.

Alternatively, a cardboard box can be used. The idea is that the rose can be planted in new soil in the box, which will protect it from the effects of the surrounding soil inherited from the old rose. By the time that the cardboard rots away, the new rose should have developed enough to cope with these effects. Liz commented that she had found it much easier to put the box in situ before planting the new rose into it.

Liz encouraged members to visit the nursery, not only for purchasing roses, but also to bring any queries and for advice. Tea, coffee and cake are available and the new rose garden is worth seeing.