

# VALENTINE ROSES

By Marty Hammond  
Revised from "Valentine Roses Are Red"  
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February 14, Valentines day and mothers day are probably the two most popular days of the year when we think of red roses. The red rose has signified the love felt and expressed between lovers, friends and families for many centuries. But apart from these dates, there is something both stirring and satisfying about the sight of a lovely red rose. The best of the reds are impossible to surpass for sumptuous, passionate beauty. Indeed, the connection between flower and color is underscored in many languages by words for "rose" that are synonyms for "red".

The rose thought to have the longest history of cultivation is probably "rosa gallica". The French or gallica rose was a wild plant with strongly perfumed flowers. It's fragrant, thickly textured petals were useful in the strewing on floors and in making potpourri. It is intriguing to think that we can still grow versions of the gallica rose in our gardens today.

Also intriguing is the red Portland rose 'Rose de Rescht'. It is intensely perfumed and one of its ancestors is believed to have been the autumn damask, 'Quatre Saisons'. The autumn damask also handed down the desirable trait of repeat flowering.

The hybrid perpetuals, fashionable during Queen Victoria's times, served as a link between the old-fashioned roses and modern roses of today. In addition to their repeat-blooming characteristic and rich fragrances, most of the hybrid perpetuals are notable for their visual appeal. Most hybrid perpetuals benefit from "pegging", that is, bending the ends of the canes to the ground and securing them. This encourages flowering stems to form along the length of the canes, creating a fountain shaped plant and a splendid show of blooms. Naturally upright in habit, they may also be trained a fence or trellis.

Red roses certainly come in many different shades, whether brilliant and shimmering, dark and purplish or blushed with coral, but not all red roses are fragrant. Fragrance varies, just as does color. Fragrance is thought to be the reason many people choose a particular rose. We all have our favorite red roses, whether they are old garden roses, floribundas, shrubs or hybrid teas and climbers. Hybrid teas are probably the most popular, having so many lovely reds in a large variety of hues. The orange-red 'Fragrant Cloud' is one of the most fragrant roses, and the very popular "reddest of reds", 'Olympiad', has very little or no scent at all. The richer coloration found in the classic dark red of 'Mister Lincoln', to the blackish crimsons of 'Chrysler Imperial' and 'Oklahoma', are very fragrant. Many gardeners have a favorite climbing red rose, one of the most popular being the scarlet red 'Blaze'. My personal favorite is 'Don Juan', which produces an abundance of large dark wine red blooms all season long, and has a most delightful fragrance.

Probably the least fragrant red roses are the miniature roses. However, red miniature rose plants make great valentine gifts. They can be brought to bloom in February and last a very long time if you include instructions on care with each plant. A live rose plant certainly will outlast a cut bouquet of roses or a box of candy given on special occasions.

"Give a friend a rose, and make a friend for life." *Author unknown*