

IS IT A "DR" DARK RED? IS IT A "DP" DEEP PINK? OR IS IT A "M" MAUVE?

By Marty Hammond

The American Rose Society, the custodian of rose registrations, has devised a color classification process that divides the spectrum of colors into 18 distinct color classes. These color classes are defined in the *American Rose Society Handbook For Selecting Roses – A Rose-Buying Guide To More Than 2,500 Varieties*.

You may not always agree with the color classification code assigned each rose by ARS. This is because there are so many variations of color and differences of opinion as to what constitutes each color class. I find this most prevalent in several of the dark red, deep pink and mauve classifications. Many roses classified as dark red or deep pink could be called mauve at some point in the maturing process of the bloom. When should you classify color? When the rose first opens from the bud stage or when it is in full bloom, or do you take into consideration what color the bloom is in its various stages of development and maturity? Does the bloom age lighter or darker or does it change color classification all together? There are roses in my garden that one single bloom can fit two or three color classifications during different stages of bloom development. For example, *The Dark Lady*, a David Austin Shrub rose classified as "DR" dark red, opens slowly into this wonderful huge very dark red bloom. As the bloom opens more fully and matures it becomes more deep pink rather than staying dark red. As I watch it mature even more, I see strong purple hues develop which leads me to believe it should be classified as mauve.

Climate and temperature enters into determining the color of many roses. *Yves Piaget*, ARS classifies as a deep pink rose, but in Deanna Flintzer's garden, in Laguna Hills, it has a definite lavender-blue hue. The yellow-blend rose, *Saint Patrick*, in my garden some 14 miles inland, looks totally different from a bloom from a bush grown close to the beach where the temperature can be as much as 10 degrees cooler. The beach area also receives fog on many days that we don't experience inland.

We all experience differences in relation to the micro climate in which we live, therefore, it is very difficult sometimes to say for sure if a particular rose is dark red, deep pink, or mauve. A miniature climber, *Ruby Pendant*, ARS classifies as mauve, but in my garden, its color is constant, in other words it does not fade lighter or turn darker, and looks to me to be more deep pink than mauve.

Just how important is an accurate color classification? Well, I don't think it matter much, except when you are personally describing or recommending a rose. If you take 10 people and give them the single color "DEEP PINK" you will have 10 different personal images as to what that color is. Rather than go strictly by the ARS color classification, I find no fault in describing a rose bloom in multiple colors or variations of color. The ARS color classification code is given as a guide only, rather than a hard fast rule. If you are using this guide to choose roses of a particular color, be aware, you may be in for some surprises when they bloom. Likewise, pictures hardly ever give you an accurate account of the color. A rose bloom rarely looks exactly as a picture shows it.

Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and every rose, regardless of color is beautiful.