

2007 AWARD OF MERIT WINNER
TREE ROSES
STANDARDS OR TOPIARIES
By Barbara Gordon

Do you grow beautiful tree roses in your garden? They are spectacular in bloom. Many are at eye level, and some may be shorter or taller or even pruned like a Topiary, but all of the tree roses are a splendid feature in our rose gardens.



From Ortho's Guide to Enjoying Roses, p. 92, 1994

A Standard in Horticulture is a tree or a plant growing on an erect stem of full height. The DEFINITION of a tree is a large plant with a woody trunk, with branches and leaves at some distance from the ground and living for many years. A rose tree topiary is a trimmed or clipped rose tree in an ornamental shape. Rose trees, topiaries and Standards are the plant growing form classification and not the type of rose with certain sizes of the bloom (like a Floribunda).

Rose tree SIZES range from one foot or 18 inches (miniature roses), three feet, 3 ½ feet, 4 feet, 5 feet, and 6 feet to 8 feet tall in milder climates like we have here in California. The rose Standard consists of three parts: understock or rootstock, stem or trunk, and the head or flowering rose. Miniature tree roses are usually budded at one foot high on the trunk. The smaller tree roses (around 2 feet) may have the label of "patio" tree roses. The best roses for a Standard are those that make a bushy, shorter stemmed plant. Polyanthas and shrub roses (especially the procumbent or ground-cover roses) make excellent semi-weeping Standards. The Hybrid Teas, Grandifloras and Floribundas are the most popular of the tree roses. Old Garden Roses, Ramblers and small Climbers are pretty as flexible Weeping tree roses cascading downward towards the ground. If they are 6 or 8 feet tall, they can appreciate and use a strong wire circular frame or cage to assist their growth and add extra strength. This cage, where the long shoots are trained, is usually three feet or larger in diameter.



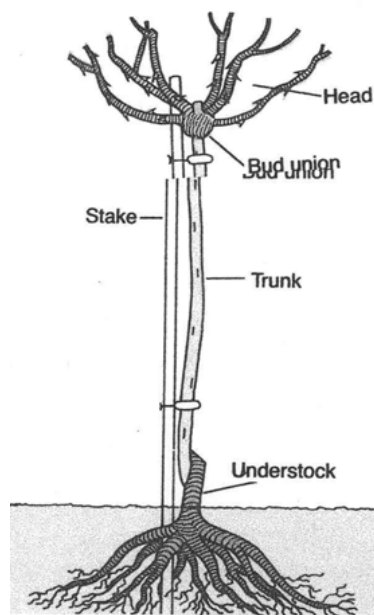
Above: Standard 'Garnette' is dramatically flanked by miniature tree rose 'Cricri' in this formal display.

From Ortho's All About Roses, p. 20, 1983

Tree roses are HISTORIC and first came into fashion in the mid-1800s, when varieties were offered in catalogs. Fewer varieties are offered as trees, because not all roses like having to

draw their sap and water up long trunks, and some roses may be weaker and easily blown over by the wind. The term 'Standard' is frequently used in the older rose books instead of 'rose trees'.

Tree roses consist of 3 PARTS: the under stock or rootstock, the stem or trunk and the head or flowering top of the tree. Rosa Canina (Briar or Dog Rose), Rosa Multiflora, Dr. Huey, Rosa Rugosa (usually in Europe), IXL and Climbing Dr. Huey are usually used for rootstock, which produces a fine, vigorous root system. Onto the rootstock is usually budded another rootstock rose that will produce a long, sturdy, thick and straight cane for the trunk. The trunk or stem rose used may be Rosa Multiflora or Rosa Canina, because they make very strong, straight stems. Budding is usually done in the Spring or Summer. After growing the trunk for one to two years, the desired Hybrid tea, Floribunda, Polyantha, Climber, Miniature or other beautiful rose is budded onto the trunk at the desired height.



From Sunset-How to Grow Roses, p. 85, 1984

The Standards are produced by budding the named varieties at selected heights on the specially selected stems. Usually two or more

buds are inserted at the top to give a well-balanced head. The flower and foliage characteristics of the budded plant remain the same. The more vigorous roses that form a compact top or that have an arching or spreading habit of growth are good for tree roses. For weeping Standards, the graceful ramblers, climbers, shrub or ground cover roses are used. Tree roses are complicated, time consuming and expensive to produce, requiring the two budding operations with so much more labor, and a three-year growth period of the rose.

To HARVEST tree roses, growers use a special high tractor that can pass over the plants as it digs the roots. These tree roses are stored, shipped and sold the same as bush roses. The bare root tree roses can be purchased the end of December, January and February. Many are potted up for sale instead. Because of our warm California weather, the roses begin growing at the first sign of warm sunshine.

Tree roses are attractive as a LANDSCAPE feature, using one in the center of other bush roses, by itself as a focal point, or in a row along a sidewalk, wall or border. Even miniature tree roses give some height variations to a bed of mini roses. Tree roses bring form and height and appear as a pleasing accent along both sides of a path or walkway. A well-grown Standard rose or roses will attract a lot of attention. A weeping Standard is excellent as a focal point, especially if it is budded five feet to eight feet high on the trunk.

A rose tree variety with poor foliage and disease will become very obvious at our eye level, so healthy, strong, reblooming varieties are the best to plant. They are best planted as accents instead of in a 'forest' of tree roses. If you plant them against a wall or fence, the beauty and form of the tree rose will stand out even more. Mixing the tree roses with small plants such as lower-growing roses, annuals, or perennials will enhance all with the color,

staggered bloom time, and form. Planted amid evergreen shrubs the tree roses can provide summer color and the winter greenery will provide a solid foundation during the rose dormant season. The Standards are excellent used in a formal or traditional garden design. The tree rose should be positioned so that it can be viewed as an individual plant or where it will stand out amongst other plants.

As you know tree roses really are not true trees. Some may have that lollipop tree look and resemble topiaries. Many miniature tree roses have been trained and pruned into two or three poodle-cut type formed balls on the tree rose. Ralph Moore's Miniature tree roses of multiple topiary-like balls of "Cinderella" are gorgeous.

CONTAINER GROWN tree roses are exquisite with an under planting of miniature plants. Small herbaceous plants, smaller miniature rose bushes, or colorful annuals or perennials with the tree rose in a large pot can be a special feature in your garden. With our milder California winters container grown tree roses are successfully grown here. Having them on a wheeled dolly-cart makes moving them easy. A potted tree rose provides a colorful accent besides a bench, door or a wall. The smaller "patio" tree roses are perfect for formal containers because the manicured look of tree roses resembles the old traditional garden décor.

The containers for outdoor roses can be rounded or square, but they should be at least 18 inches across and deep (about 13 gallons) for good root growth for large-sized roses. Smaller 5 or 7 gallon pots or tubs (5-gallon pots are approximately 12 inches across and 15 inches deep) can be used to grow excellent roses if watered properly and regularly, but the larger container is better. Miniature tree roses can be grown in two-gallon pots satisfactorily. Containers can be made of clay, plastic, wood, concrete or the new synthetic materials. A good-sized pot will allow the roots to grow and will keep the rose tree safe during high

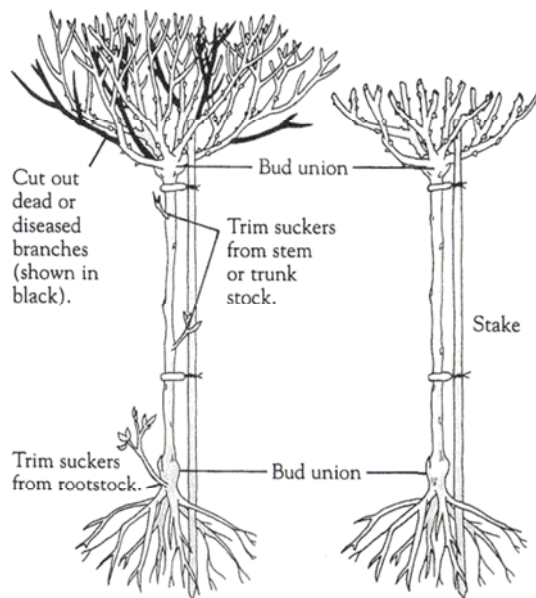
winds. Planting mini tree roses in pots makes maintenance easier, because they can be elevated on a bench or table for pruning and tender loving care.

The same procedures for preparing the soil and PLANTING the tree roses should be followed as the bush roses. Generous holes should be dug to accommodate the spreading roots of the tree rose. Spacing should be generous—at least three feet apart, five feet is better. Weeping Standards need eight feet to ten feet between them, and may benefit from a wire form or cage of the umbrella pattern to train growth.

Tree roses must always be kept STAKED to keep them upright and prevent the wind from breaking them off. The trees are top-heavy when in full foliage and flower. They need the support from wooden, bamboo, plastic or Rebar stakes or poles. Wooden stakes do rot after several years and will need to be adjusted or replaced. The stake should be set in place at planting time, so that the roots will not be damaged. Place the stake at least 18 inches into the soil for adequate support on the sunny side of the plant to provide partial shade for the trunk, which is sensitive to the hot summer sun (sun-scalding). The stake should extend several inches into the head (flowering part). Fasten the stake to the rose with flexible green nylon ties, nylon stockings, leather strips, straps, or plastic covered wire in two places. Check the ties every year, so the rose tree trunk will have room to grow.

Watering, fertilizing and mulching CARE conditions of tree roses may be the same as large bush roses. Be sure the rose name LABEL is either fastened to the rose or placed in the ground nearby. Luckily our winters are mild, so we do not need special winter protection for the rose trees. We do not have to bury the whole tree or bring it into the garage.

PRUNING TREE ROSES



From Ortho's All About Roses, p. 49, 1983

Tree roses may be **PRUNED** just as are modern bush roses of the same variety, only not as severely. Cut out the dead or diseased branches and leave healthy large canes pruned back to above a good bud or bud eye. Weak and small canes and those too close together should be pruned off also. To be more attractive tree roses must have a good balanced top or head. Symmetry is important when pruning, the head should not have any stems extending beyond its approximate dome-shaped sphere. The foliage can then fill out to a full and round shape. Prune canes to about 12 inches beyond the bud union at the top of the trunk and leave the canes evenly spaced around the plant if growing tree roses in cold climates. Here in California with the warm weather, pruning about one half of the plant each winter is the recommended procedure.

All weeping or trailing Standards should be pruned hard the first season, so the trunk will develop into a sturdy tree with a strong root system. These weepers usually make more thin, twiggy type of canes if they are ramblers or climbers. The canes should be thinned and

those which are reaching the ground should be cut back to retain a symmetrical shape. The once blooming ramblers should be pruned after they bloom in the summer like the Old Garden Roses. Keep in mind that pruning of tree roses should be less severe than their bush counterparts.

SUCKERS that sprout from the trunk or rootstock should be removed. Cut them as close to their base as possible. The rootstock may have to be dug out to keep them from repeat sprouting of foliage growth.

Not all rose **VARIETIES** are suitable for tree roses. Those roses that have tall upright growth may grow out of sight and reach. Some rose growers may custom bud tree rose varieties for us. Usually only some varieties are available en masse every winter and sell out quickly.

I prefer the Floribunda tree roses such as "Iceberg", "Showbiz", "Trumpeter", "Angel Face", "Pleasure" and "Julia Child". The polyantha "The Fairy" and many miniature rose trees are charming smaller flowering favorites. The Hybrid teas "Double Delight", "Peace" and "Sunset Celebration" always are showy, beautiful and very dramatic. And the rose topiaries or lollipop rose trees are a fabulous feature in our gardens.

Shouldn't everyone have at least one rose tree or rose Standard? They make our rose gardens complete, and they are so elegant, colorful and beautiful.