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**“Poinciana and Tough Roses”**

This year, it is impossible not to notice poinciana, also called Pride of Barbados, in commercial and residential plantings all over the city. It is the plant with the glow-in-the-dark orange and red flower clusters above the airy light green foliage. In full sun, poinciana is hard to match for showy blooms and drought tolerance.

Poinciana is often grown on boulevards close to the street or in parking lots. In the San Antonio Garden Center parking lot, you can see it enjoying the hot sun, side-by-side with esperanza and firebush. In addition to the spectacular blooms, you will notice the butterflies and hummingbirds that seek it out as a nectar sources.

Poinciana freezes back to the roots each winter and emerges in late spring in the warm temperature. It is more sensitive to cold than esperanza but is reliably root hardy. It will grow to about 7 feet tall every summer. The bloom period can be extended if the seed pods are removed.

Poinciana is now available at area nurseries for planting. While you are checking out the poinciana at your favorite nursery, also consider the tough modern and old-fashioned roses. Quite often they are on sale at this time of the year. They are not native plants, but they are good xeriscape plants that are capable of surviving without supplemental irrigation once they are established.

My favorite roses include Martha Gonzales, Butterfly Rose, Mrs. Dudley Cross, Grandma’s Yellow, Carefree Beauty (Katy Road Pink) and Belinda’s Dream.

Martha Gonzales rose grows to 3.5 feet tall. It is covered with small, blood-red blooms for eight to nine months of the year. The new foliage is also quite red. Use this tough rose to keep pedestrian traffic on sidewalks instead of in the planting area of churches and shops.

Butterfly Rose is a very large plant, 8 feet tall and 8 feet around, that has a flat 3-inch bloom that changes from peach to yellow to crimson as it matures. Butterfly rose will bloom all year if the winter is mild and it is growing in a sheltered location.

Mrs. Dudley Cross produces light peach-colored blooms that make excellent cut flowers with florist-quality buds. The plant grows to about 7 feet tall and 4 feet wide. It does not have thorns.

Grandma’s Yellow has showy, yellow blooms that make good cut flowers. The plant is smaller than Mrs. Dudley Cross, and the bloom period is seven to eight months, depending on the weather.

Carefree Beauty (Katy Road Pink) is my favorite tough modern rose. The plant grows to 6 feet tall and 4 feet around on most sites. It produces its pink 3-inch blooms for eight months of the year. The blooms are flat with a single petal layer, but they are very attractive when the plant is used as a specimen or in a cluster. The blooms are followed by large rose hips that can be used for tea for those so inclined. The hips are also eaten by birds and other wildlife.

Belinda’s Dream is another of the xeriscape roses that produce florist-quality blooms. The light pink flowers are multilayered with a light fragrance. Belinda’s Dream grows to 6 feet tall and 4 feet around. It produces blooms for eight months of the year.

The old-fashioned and tough modern roses are desirable because of their blooms and drought tolerance. They can survive without supplemental irrigation but bloom better with a deep watering every three weeks. Pesticide sprays are not necessary, and pruning is optional. If planted now, they will have a flush of blooms this fall until early winter.

**“Garden Tasks”**

If you have Bermuda, zoysia or buffalo grass, you can let it go dormant by turning off sprinklers for the remainder of the summer. It will green up and recover fully when the rains resume.

Zinnias can be attacked by powdery mildew. If it happens, just replant. The summer bloom period lasts until Thanksgiving.

Well-adapted shrubs and trees can survive a dry summer without supplemental irrigation, but newly planted trees and shrubs and those growing in stressful situations, such as parking lots, need special attention and extra water.

Keep the okra, peppers and southern peas harvested, so that they continue to produce a supply of young tender vegetables.