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**“Tough Roses”**

There are a number of roses that I classify as “tough roses”. My definition includes the these rose’s ability to survive without supplemental irrigation, tolerate insects and diseases without sprays, provide blooms at least eight months out of the year, and require only minimal pruning, and certainly not every year.

Because they can survive all of these challenges, doesn’t mean they don’t benefit when watered during drought and attention to other stresses. They will bloom more with better care but perform admirable without it.

My list includes: Care Free Beauty Pink (Katy Road), Martha Gonzales, Belinda’s Dream, Mrs. Dudley Cross, Butterfly Rose (Mutabilis) and Knockout.

Carefree Beauty Pink makes a shrub about 6 feet tall and 3 feet in diameter. The flower opens to be about 4 inches across. It has a single or double petal layer and is a rich pink color. The flowers have a pleasant light fragrance. Carefree Beauty Pink forms nickel-size rose hips all through its long blooming period. They decorate the plant in the winter and are eventually eaten by the birds unless the gardener harvests them for rose hip tea.

Use Carefree Beauty Pink as a specimen plant or in a bed. The blooms and buds make attractive cut flowers but do not last as long as other roses once cut.

Martha Gonzales is an old-fashioned rose that grows to about 5 feet tall and 4 feet in diamter. The flowers are half-dollar size and blood red. As attractive as the flowers are, the foliage is also showy. New growth is red and all through the growing season it has a red-green color.

Martha Gonzales makes a great low hedge in full sun and is often used to direct traffic at churches and other high-pedestrian traffic locations. The thorns are not savage, but the plant is compact. Pedestrians find it easier to admire Martha Gonzales as they stay on the designated sidewalk.

Belinda’s Dream is a tough modern rose with a flower that approximates floral quality. The buds are exquisite and open to multilayered blooms of very light pink. Belinda’s Dream makes an excellent cut flower.

In size and growth habit, Belinda’s Dream is very much like Katy Road (Care Free Beauty). In fact, they make an attractive bed when multiple plants of the two varieties are grown together.

Mrs. Dudley Cross is an old-fashioned rose that grows to about 7 feet tall and 4 feet in diameter. The flowers are a light peach color with attractive buds and multilayered petals.

Use Mrs. Dudley Cross as a specimen plant in the landscape. Greg Grant, author and area horticulturist, dubbed the “Mrs. Dudley Cross” as the yellow rose of Texas when he was the Extension Horticulturist in San Antonio. There is a transition of flower color as the rose matures but any hint of yellow is fleeting.

The Butterfly Rose also called, Mutabilis, has a more distinct transition of colors as the blooms mature. The silver-dollar size, flat, single layered, bloom stands out as light crimson.

Butterfly rose makes a large plant. It is not unusual for specimens to be 10 feet tall and12 or 14 feet around. In addition to providing nine or 10 months of color for the landscape, the large shrubs make good cover for birds.

Knockout is very popular. The original version had a red half-dollar size bloom with a few layers of petals. The new versions (pink, multilayered petals) may not be as tough as the original. Use Knockout in sunny shrub beds and for a relatively short hedge. It grows to about 6 feet tall and 3 feet in diameter.

The selection of these tough roses is at its peak in February at area nurseries and it is also a good time to plant them.

**“Garden Tasks”**

Now is the time to aerate and top dress. Lawn aeration and top dressing with compost improves the lawn.

Plant your potatoes, broccoli transplants and cabbage transplants over the next month. You can also plant carrots, radishes, turnips and beets by seed.

Prevent the winter weeds in the lawn from producing seed by keeping the lawn mowed. The mowing will also speed up the decomposition of the leaves.

It is still a good time to plant trees and shrubs.