

Help My Roses are Gasping! – the Best Species for High Country Gardens Meeting Summary by Grace Gehret, CPVGC Secretary



Peggy Williams, Master Rosarian, presented the program; “Help, My Roses are Gasping—the Best Species for High Country Gardens.” Peggy has been growing roses for 15 years and is an active member of the Denver Rose Society. Betty Cahill, also a member of the Denver Rose Society, assisted Peggy with the presentation.

Peggy’s lecture included a handout that sequentially covered the lecture highlights as they related to the slide presentation. As Peggy talked it was clear that she takes a sensible and practical approach to gardening and obviously loves roses.

Peggy explained that the 7 habits of highly effective rose growers include; choosing a good site, preparing the soil properly, mulching, fertilizing, watering, choosing the best varieties, and using gentle intervention for pests and diseases.

Choosing a good Site: The site should have 6 hours of sun and no competing tree roots. It must be accessible for care and have adequate drainage. Plan for the mature size of the plant. Adequate airflow and good drainage is also necessary.

Preparing the Soil: Add organic matter to the soil but take care not to add too much. No more than 1 inch of manure should be added because of the high salt content. Miracle Grow is much too high in nutrients. Avoid working the soils when wet.

Mulch: This is a product that will moderate the soil temperature so pull it back in May and re-apply in early July. Mulch conserves water, keeps down weeds and , if organic, will enrich the soil.

Fertilizing: There is no universally accepted right fertilizer. Organic products are preferred and Peggy recommended Mile HI Rose Feed. Plants should be fertilized every 4 to 6 weeks starting in late April and ending in mid -August. One should water before and after fertilizing.

Watering: The need to water depends on weather, drainage, and soil structure. A mature plant requires about 1 inch of water a week but check the soil first. Water the base of the plant in the AM and winter water as needed.

Choose the best Varieties: There are 15,000 varieties of roses, and Peggy recommended High Country Roses, in Arvada, as a good resource for many rose varieties. Shrub roses are usually hardy but grafted roses are less hardy. Mini roses can be grown in pots and can be purchased cheaply at King Soopers. Although all roses are Peggy’s “favorites”, she particularly likes ‘Rose de Rescht’ which re-blooms and is fragrant. It can

be grown a pot. 'John Davis' is a very good climber and 'Winnipeg Parks' produces pretty foliage and rose hips that are of interest during the winter. 'Abraham Darby' originated in England and "everyone should have it". The 'Peace' rose was hybridized in France, just before World War Two. Because all the land in France was to be used for food, five 'Peace' plants were smuggled to the American Embassy and saved. Knock-Out Roses require very little care and are disease resistant. Old Garden Roses were planted before 1867 and they are medium to very tall growers. They have an open bloom that is best in Spring.

Be Observant and use gentle intervention for pests and diseases: In her handout, Peggy listed the many pests that can affect roses. There are a variety of ways to get rid of them but she admitted that in some cases it is better to eliminate the plant. Diseases such as powdery Mildew, Rust, Anthracnose, Blackspot, Botrytis and Rose Mosaic Virus can sometimes be treated. GreenCure was recommended for Powdery Mildew but Peggy recommended getting rid of a rose having blackspot.

In closing, Peggy strongly encouraged gardeners to update their tetanus shots. The microbes that cause tetanus reside in the soil so we are all vulnerable if not properly immunized.