

Dear Gardening Friends,

Roses grow well in our Gloucester garden. The buds are reluctantly, yet deliberately, beginning to open in the cool dampness of this year's early June weather. While coming and going along the garden pathway and up and down the front stairs, we are teased by their fleeting scent. I am impatient for their beauty and fragrance. The climbers and ramblers grow more massive, and ever taller still, and soon the garden, and the adjoining rooms to our home, will be infused with their pervasive perfume. The large-flowered redolent climbers 'Aloha' and 'New Dawn,' along with 'Variegata di Bologna,' clamber up the porch pillars. 'Louise Odier' and 'Souvenir de Victor Landeau,' both sumptuously scented Bourbon roses, are planted adjacent to these beauties, one on either side of the front steps. Around the corner is the rugosa hybrid 'Therese Bugnet,' with inherent beach rose fragrance, and opposite her is my mystery rose, climbing two stories tall, her aromatic Persian pink blossoms draped about our second story bedroom window. Sublime, really.

Because the roses are sited within close proximity to the house, along the garden paths and embowering the front entryway and windows, few pests or diseases escape my attentive eye. Eliminating the earliest Japanese beetles helps to control a mass onslaught. Removing, and carefully disposing of, leaves that show the first signs of black spot helps to retard the spread of the disease.

The following is an excerpt from *Oh Garden of Fresh Possibilities!* For extensive information on rose culture and an expanded list of the most richly scented cultivars see Chapter 14 titled *Roses for the Intimate Garden*.

### *Rosa bourboniana*

The Bourbon roses (*Rosa bourboniana*) comprise one of the most extravagantly scented class of roses, along with having a wide range of growth habit in form and height. From the shrubby and compact 'Souvenir de la Malmaison,' growing to about two feet, to the thornless climbing 'Zephirine Drouhin,' there is a suitable Bourbon rose available to fill nearly every conceivable desired effect in the landscape.

Named for the island of Reunion, formerly called Isle de Bourbon, *Rosa bourboniana* is a natural crossing of the China rose (repeat blooming) with the Autumn Damask rose. Reunion belongs to the archipelago of Mascareignes in the Indian Ocean and lies east of Madagascar. Originally discovered by the Portuguese, then colonized by the French in the seventeenth-century, Reunion had a diverse population of settlers from around Africa, Asia, and southern Europe. The Bourbon rose was discovered growing wild in Reunion in approximately 1817.

Hybridized Bourbon roses flower in hues of white to china pink to cerise and purple. The flowers are quartered at the center and filled with overlapping petals. With their sublime fragrance, tolerance for cold temperatures, and freedom of flowering ('Louise Odier' remains in bloom from June until the first frost), Bourbons are amongst the most distinctive of all roses.

The following is a list of Bourbon roses successfully growing in our garden, along with

one failure noted.

‘Louise Odier’ ~ 1851 ~ Bourbon ~ Delicate china pink, camellia-style flowers, enchanting and intensely fragrant. Blooms lavishly throughout the season, from early June to November, with a brief rest after the first flush of June flowers. Grows four to five feet.

‘Zéphirine Drouhin’ ~ 1868 ~ Bourbon ~ Clear hot pink. Thornless. The sensuous Bourbon fragrance is there, only not as intense relative to some others noted here. Repeat blooms. Twelve feet.

‘Madame Isaac Pereire’ ~ 1881 ~ Bourbon ~ Deep raspberry-magenta. Considered to be one of the most fragrant roses. Six to seven feet. Note: We no longer grow Madame Isaac Pereire as its buds usually turned into brown, blobby globs that rarely fully opened due to damp sea air.

‘Souvenir de Victor Landeau’ ~ 1890 ~ Bourbon ~ Deep rose pink, richly fragrant and consistently in bloom through October and into November. Pairs beautifully with Louise Odier. Four to five feet.

‘Variegata di Bologna’ ~ 1909 ~ Bourbon ~ Creamy pale pink with rose-red striations. Suffused with the heady Bourbon fragrance. The foliage becomes tattered-looking later in the season. Slight repeat bloom, although it initially flowers for an extended period of time, four to six weeks in all. Tall growing, best supported against a pillar.

‘Souvenir de Saint Anne’s’ ~ 1916 ~ Bourbon ~ Ivory flushed with warm pink and cream single to semi-double blossoms. Sensuous Bourbon fragrance. Compact growing, ideal for the garden room. Continually blooming. Two feet. Note: ‘Souvenir de St. Anne’ is a sport of ‘Souvenir de la Malmaison’ (1843), with the similar lovely colorway. The unopened buds and blooms of ‘Malmaison’ have the tendency to be ruined in damp air, whereas ‘St. Anne’s’ do not.

*Several tips for improved rose culture:*

Aphids are soft-bodied, winged and non-winged, gnat-sized insects found in a range of colors—bright green, reddish brown, orange, yellow, and black. They form colonies on the tender new growth tips of roses and will suck the moisture out of every flower bud. Vigilance is key. Simple and organic methods for controlling aphids include spraying the infested area vigorously with a garden hose set on a jet stream directed onto the infested new growth (preferably in the very early morning to allow the foliage to dry) and then repeating this routine for a total of three days; snipping the infested tips and discarding them into the trash; or introducing beneficial insects such as ladybugs, praying mantises, and green lacewings.

If spraying with a garden hose proves to be ineffective, or you do not want to wet the foliage for three days during a particularly damp season, try a mixture of one tablespoon (begin with a tablespoon or two, gradually increasing the dose as needed) of

Dr. Bonner's peppermint soap to one gallon of water. Spray liberally; this will suffocate the pesky creatures.

Ladybugs and praying mantises will stay if there is a continual supply of food. For the past several years we have done nothing at the onset of an aphid invasion. The welcome green lacewings have decided to call our garden home; the larvae of the green lacewing efficiently eradicates the aphids. Their nickname, "aphid lion," gives an indication of the role the lacewings play in the rhythm of the garden.

Pruning is necessary to maintain the overall desired shape of the rose plant, to increase its number of blossoms, and to keep pests and diseases at bay. To encourage vertical growth while becoming established, climbers and ramblers should not be pruned. When it does become necessary to prune a rose plant, cut off to the base old, dark brown woody canes that are no longer flowering. Canes crossing over other canes can be removed for a neater appearance. Weak and twiggy growth and blackened tips from winter damage should also be removed.

Bourbon roses generally require minimal pruning. Roses that bloom repeatedly throughout the summer (this includes all the aforementioned Bourbons, with the exception of 'Variegata di Bologna') should be pruned just after the first flush of flowering. Repeat bloomers also benefit from diligent deadheading and an occasional neatening during their extended period of florescence, by removing tattered foliage and twiggy growth. In early March, and again after the first flush of flowers, remove weak and twiggy growth and apply a three- to four-inch layer of compost to the drip-line to help control black spot.

A sepal, a petal, and a thorn  
Upon a common summer's morn—  
A flash of Dew—A Bee or two—  
A Breeze—  
A caper in the trees—  
And I'm a Rose!

— Emily Dickinson

End Notes: Please join me on Sunday, June 21<sup>st</sup> from 10 am to 11am for a booksigning and informal lecture at the [Sargent House Museum's](#) garden festival. For tickets and information about the weekend-long event, information is available on their website.

The 2009 Summer Concert Series at [Willowdale Estate](#) begins on Thursday, June 18<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 pm. "At the Heart of June" features the music of Martinu, Poulens, and Messiaen for piano, cello, clarinet, and violin. Light reception sponsored by Willowdale. Tickets are on sale now at [Eden's Edge](#).

*'Souvenir de Victor Landeau'*





*Rosa 'Louise Odier'*