Winter Rose Reading

This time of the year we are forced indoors both by the cold weather and shortened days. We can use this time to benefit our hobby by reading more about roses. Winter is a great time to increase your rose knowledge through reading. With thousands of books available you can choose from an area that interests you. Culture, Old Garden Roses, climbers, miniatures, arrangements, rose identification, exhibiting, organic gardening and others have books that cover that area. I would like to share with you some of these books that I have found useful and enjoyed.

Not all of the books I discuss are available for sale at your local bookstore. However many may be obtained through the internet or interlibrary loan at your local library. Another source that I have found useful is used book stores. You can sometimes find good, out of print rose books.

“He who would have beautiful Roses in his garden must have beautiful Roses in his heart.” This famous statement was made by S. Reynolds Hole, the Dean of Rochester, in his 1896 book A Book About Roses. It is very interesting to read and understand the passion he had about growing roses at the end of the nineteenth century.

A book put out in great quantity and a number of editions is How to Grow Roses by Robert Pyle, president of the The Conard and Jones Co, of West Grove, PA. This book is a guide for the amateur rose grower. My 1915 edition lists 150 of what are considered the best roses. It is nice to realize that we continue to grow roses today that were growing then like Crested Moss and R. rugosa.

A great way to track the development of the rose through the last century is to read the American Rose Society Annuals. Put out each year the annuals started in 1916 and continue through the present. What we know as Roses in review was started as the Proof of the Pudding; which gave the current view of the best roses to grow for that year. They have many interesting articles on rose culture and rose growers.

We are always looking for a better way to grow roses and there are many different ideas in use. Almost all rose books have something about growing roses. When I was starting to grow roses and started looking at rose books I found Rayford C. Reddell’s Growing Good Roses. It was a great guide for a beginner rose grower and gave me the culture guidance to be successful. The only problem with it is that he grew his roses in California. Not everything he suggested worked here in the Delaware valley. So as my knowledge has increased and my interest in rose culture has deepened I find myself using and recommending two books. The first is the American Rose Society’s Consulting Rosarian Manual. As the name implies it is a manual about rose growing. It covers all aspects of growing and has been updated and revised recently. It is a manual all rose growers can use. It is not restricted to or only for Consulting Rosarians.

The second book that I like is A Year of Roses by Stephen Scanniello. It gives month by month guidance on what to do in your garden. Living in New Jersey and growing roses here adds to his expertise for me.

For the organic gardener I recommend The Organic Rose Garden by Liz Druitt and Judith McKeon’s Encyclopedia of Roses. Both are written to provide information on growing roses using an organic approach. You will find an interesting recommendation to add urine to your compost by Liz Druitt in her book. If you are interested in companion plantings, Judith McKeon also wrote Gardening with Roses.
Three great books that describe the historical development of roses and are filled with outstanding photography are Peter Beales’ *Classic Roses*; its companion *Twentieth Century Roses*. And *The Heritage of the Rose* by David Austin. These are also very good references to help find and identify older roses.

Taylor’s *Guide to Roses* is also a good reference to help find and identify both older and modern roses. It is filled with rose pictures and descriptions.

A fun book to read is Thomas Christopher’s *In Search of Lost Roses*. He describes his adventures as a rose rustler. He searched for old roses in many places trying to find and identify roses and take cuttings.

Anyone that has an interest in exhibiting must read *Showing Good Roses* by Robert Martin Jr. This is a very through book on how to grow and show roses that win. I think exhibitors should also read the ARS Judges Manual and Design Judges Manual. These are very helpful to understand what the judges are looking for as they review the entries.

I know that there are many great rose books that I haven’t mentioned. Every book has something that can help add to your gardening knowledge and rose enjoyment. One last book that I recently obtained is for our arrangers. Not strictly a rose book but fun reading is *Ikebana is better than Therapy* by Susuma Uyeda. Enjoy your books and reading this winter.

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