



This breathtaking wall of roses at the Royal Botanical Gardens in Burlington has been formed by "American Pillar," a single, large-flowered rose that can be trained to grow over a pergola.

Photos for this feature were taken with this equipment on loan from Nikon: the D300s camera with a 17-55 mm Nikon lens and a SB-600 Speedlight flash.

Rehabilitating Roses

Photographs by Mike Davis
Words by Gloria Hildebrandt

The Rose Garden
in Hendrie Park at Royal
Botanical Gardens (RBG) in
Burlington is a large area to wander
through, full of dazzling colours, fragrance and
plant sizes. It is also a garden in transition
away from chemical controls.

Rehabilitating Roses

A sign in the RBG garden last summer explained the situation. The 2009 ban on cosmetic pesticide use eliminated the ability to control roses' pests and diseases by chemical means. Some of the roses looked a little stressed, like drug addicts quitting cold turkey and going into withdrawal.

"Bear with us," the sign stated, "these roses may look a little battle-weary, but we've only begun the fight. In the end, we'll have healthy roses – and sustainable ways to keep them that way."

Last summer, Carlo Balistrieri, the head of horticulture at RBG, explained "Since the cosmetic pesticide ban, there are challenges, particularly from black spot and the Japanese beetle. Roses have been high maintenance as garden plants. We're working toward a more low-maintenance rose that's resistant to pests and disease. We're changing the way we do things. We feed, mulch, amend the soil more. We want roses that will grow well with minimum intervention from us."

Recently, when asked which roses look promising based on last summer's performance, Balistrieri replied "I would hesitate to recommend any rose based on only one or two years' performance. Most people are looking for a long life from the shrubs they purchase, and the short view could be misleading. RBG is still adjusting to life with a smaller toolbox. Part of our effort in the Rose Garden, and the reason for planting 765 new plants this past fall, is to continue our look at what will work and what won't." Then he went on to list some RBG favourites from last year. See sidebar page 38.

We also asked some other garden experts along the Niagara Escarpment for their rose recommendations and tips. There was a fair bit of similarity in their answers, suggesting we may be on our way to accepted best practices for growing roses in our biosphere reserve.



Carlo Balistrieri, head of horticulture at RBG, at the strong climber "American Pillar." He advises "It should be deadheaded after the flush in June, to provide a second bloom in September."



The exuberant Hybrid Moschata Rose 'Belinda' climbs the tree branches at the Royal Botanical Gardens.





"When I think of roses I think of the romantics," says Balistrieri, "the reds, soft pinks, whites."



Roses have traditionally been used in formal garden designs. Another element of the RBC Rose Garden is a pair of long infinity pools, just visible at the top of this photo.

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Rehabilitating Roses

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Promising Performers at RBG in 2011

Rosa "Tabris"

Rosa "Wekvossutono,"
sold as Julia Child

Rosa "Elina," a 1985 hybrid tea that appears to be disease resistant
The Knock Out™ Series,
disease-resistant shrub roses in seven colours

Rosa Rugosa and its cultivars, disease and insect resistant

How to Grow Great Roses

A sunny area with a minimum of six to eight hours per day, and good circulation, clear from tree roots with good drainage, are ideal.

Barb McColl,
Sheridan Nurseries,
Georgetown

Tips for Growing Without Pesticides

Companion planting with insect-detering plants such as lavender, marigolds and garlic, will deter pests from the area with strong fragrance and less-than-favourable taste to aphids. Natural and homemade remedies from onions, garlic and baking soda.

Colleen Zimmerman,
Terra Greenhouses, Waterdown

Good Roses to Grow in Northern Parts of the Niagara Escarpment

Parkland series of roses such as Morden Blush or Morden Sunrise
Weeks roses such as Party Hardy
Explorer roses such as John Cabot, Champlain, Henry Hudson, Henry Kelsey, Alexander MacKenzie
Knock Out roses

Oso Happy series such as Oso Happy Smoothie or Oso Happy Candy Oh

Lorraine Roberts,
Plant Paradise Country Gardens,
Caledon

Roses for Niagara Region

Visit RBG and the Niagara Parks School of Horticulture to look at their collections in bloom!

Carlo Balistreri,
RBG, Burlington EV



The perfect placement of this wooden





Water, sunshine for roses and a long shady pergola to walk under at the edge of the Rose Garden provide a lovely afternoon in July.



bench in the RBG Rose Garden is another example of attention to detail.



Beauty in nature has often been an inspiration to artists.