



Recently in an interview with the Garden Design Journal, I made a fleeting and insincere comment about how English country gardens seem to be all about roses and *Nepeta* and that Christopher Lloyd's garden, Great Dixter, is an exception. However, when I saw the proof of the interview, I was horrified to read that my tongue-in-cheek comment about English country gardens was included – I very quickly got it excluded because it is unjust and untrue. Nonetheless, I do feel that we pay a lot of attention to roses – I guess because their beauty fascinates us in some way more than other flowering shrubs.

I have to admit that for the last five years my fascination with roses was limited to trying to select healthy and repeat-flowering roses for the Inner Temple Rose Border, which won't require a weekly spraying requiem of fungicide to keep black spot and mildew at bay. I am very pleased

that I have come to a point, where I can wholeheartedly and with full conviction recommend at least ten disease-resistant and repeat-flowering cultivars for a rose garden. Equally sharing places ten to five are *Rosa* 'Corvedale', 'Generous Gardener', 'Geoff Hamilton', 'Louise Odier' and 'William Shakespeare'. Place four takes *Rosa chinensis*, a rare species, that can bloom with is deep vivid pink flowers throughout the year and tolerates some shade and is evergreen in our climate. Third place has to go to *Rosa* 'Mortimer Sackler', it can be trained as a climber or shrub rose, its dark thornless foliage complements the soft pink flowers that don't cease when the deadheading regime has elapsed and it is the healthiest one on my recommendation list. Second place: *Rosa x odorata* 'Mutabilis', we grow this beauty for the unusual qualities of its flowers, which bloom continuously from spring until frost. The single



Rosa 'Darcy Bussell'

cupped flowers open a honey-yellow, and then they become coppery-pink, then watermelon, and finally a rich mahogany. The foliage is reddish purple, disease-resistant, and like *Rosa chinensis* is also evergreen in our climate and therefore lends itself to be used in bouquets even when it is not flowering. The gardens' team favourite and the top of my list is a traditional English Old Rose 'Darcy Bussell'. Like the ballerina, this hybrid displays great stamina, flowers freely with excellent continuity and is very healthy. The rich crimson coloured blooms, which become flushed with mauve before the petals fall, form a beautiful large rosette.

Despite their great health record, we still have adopted a spraying regime – however it is an organic and holistic one. Throughout the winter, we apply sulphur, which is a natural remedy for blackspot and powdery mildew and encourages blemish-free growth. As soon as the roses break through the leaf bud we start treating the foliage with a biodegradable and non-toxic plant invigorator, which will keep aphids and whitefly at bay and improves the vigour, which in turn helps them to stay healthy.

You might have noticed that my recommendation of roses only ranges from pale to dark pink colour shades, which I chose deliberately to ensure that the different roses harmonise with each other and with the under-planting of grey-silver foliage and pale blue flowers of *Nepeta racemosa* 'Walkers Low', the most compact catmint cultivar, which is a great partner to any rose.

I also must admit, I do very much look forward to enjoying our rose border this year, because I now can rest assured that all our selected roses will stay healthy and, together with the *Nepeta*, gives us some of our own dose of the soft, romantic, English garden look in the burgeoning months of summer.



SEASONAL BOUQUETS FOR A SPECIAL OCCASION

This spring the Garden Team started a new venture in offering unique and seasonal floral bouquets for sale, which are grown, picked and arranged at the Inner Temple Garden. We are passionate about local organic British cut flowers and feel that this developing and sustainable industry deserves incorporation into our day-to-day lives, like organic vegetables in our weekly shop. If you would like to purchase some beautiful fresh flowers from the Inner Temple garden, bouquets are available to view and order from the Treasury Office.

