

Pegging Roses

Unleashing the color

Dr. Brent Pemberton

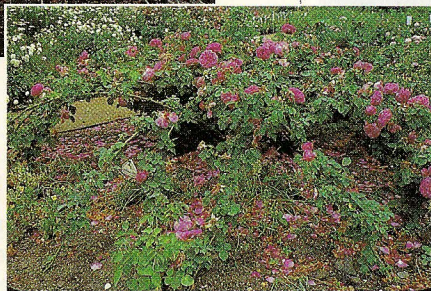
Someone once asked me why I was interested in roses. After some reflection, I answered that the genus *Rosa* offers some of the greatest diversity known in the plant kingdom.

Along with a diversity of plant habit, part of the challenge of growing roses is learning how to prune the many different types. Many gardeners quickly master the winter cutback required for hybrid teas and floribundas and the lighter pruning treatment required by the shrub types. They then begin looking for a greater challenge.

Pegging roses is a method that can provide that additional challenge. Pegging can turn a plant with a few tall lanky canes waving a few flowers at their



The canes of a pegged rose, in dormant season, and in bloom.
Photos by G. Michael Shoup.



tips into a veritable fountain of color. While it requires some additional effort, the unique flowering effect can be quite rewarding.

The best varieties for pegging (see sidebar, right, for suggestions) are those that produce tall (about 6 feet), somewhat limber canes with blooms at the tip. Vigorous climbers are not good candidates. Varieties in the hybrid groups known as Bourbon, Hybrid Perpetual, and Alba lend themselves well to pegging. Also, any rose known as a Pillar rose is probably a good candidate. Finding your favorite one that works in your landscape situation is part of the challenge and fun.

Fall or winter prior to the spring bud break is a good time to begin the process. I have found that pegging during the fall tidying up period in the garden is a good

time and keeps the canes from being whipped about by winter winds. By the end of the first season of growth on a new plant or using an established one, you will find many tall canes that should be mature enough not to snap when bent toward the ground. These can then be pulled down to within a few inches of the ground and fastened with metal hooks or U-shaped pins that are long enough to remain anchored in the ground (10 plus inches). You can also tie the canes to stakes in the ground or to a criss-cross of wires strung between stakes if it is a large bed with many roses. The cane ends should be removed so the they are not touching the ground to prevent rooting and occasional die-back. In established plants, older canes may have to be removed at the crown to make way for newer ones that will flower more freely.

The following spring, the apical dominance of the cane is broken because of the bending, and most of the buds found at the base of each leaf or node along the cane will grow and bloom in profusion. As these blooms fade, each new shoot can be pruned by one-third to one-half to a strong bud. That will stimulate repeat bloom in many varieties.

The only down side of pegging will be the somewhat unkempt look after blooming, when the long lanky canes that will be used for the next season erupt into growth. Beauty has its price!

The possibilities for landscape effect with pegged roses are only limited by the imagination of the gardener. The canes can be tied toward the ends for a fountain effect or they can be tied in more than one place to keep them more horizontal, resembling spokes on a wheel.

Pegged roses can be used as specimens or in mass to cover beds of any shape. They can be used to cover slopes with a carpet of color or tied to fit a triangular bed. Unleash your imagination and have some fun. ♦

About the author: Dr. Brent Pemberton is a professor and heads plant research programs at A&M's Overton Center.

Varieties for pegging

This is by no means an exhaustive list, but these roses should do well in Texas. Don't limit yourself!

American Beauty

1875, Hybrid Perpetual, 4 to 6 feet. Cupped dark pink flowers on a plant that performs better after it is well established.

Baronne Prevost

1842, Hybrid Perpetual, 4 to 5 feet. Shallow cupped blooms with many petals and good fragrance. Responds to a rich well-drained soil.

Cardinal de Richelieu

1840, Gallica, 3 to 5 feet. Rich mauve color unique to this class.

Celsiana

Before 1750, Damask, 4 to 6 feet. Full pink flowers that were painted by Redouté.

Frau Karl Druschki

1901, Hybrid Perpetual, 6 to 8 feet. One of the whitest flowers on the planet with a high center. Also known as 'White American Beauty.'

Honorine de Brabant

Introduction date unknown, Bourbon, 5 to 7 feet. Double, loosely cupped and fragrant flowers that are pink striped with violet and mauve. Good repeat bloom.

Königin von Dänemark

1826, Alba, 5 to 6 feet. Somewhat more spreading and not as tall as other Albas. Full deep pink that requires deadheading.

Madame Ernest Calvat

1888, Bourbon, 6 to 8 feet. The red new growth is a perfect contrast to the pale pink flowers with dark pink centers. Flowers are large and fragrant.

Madame Isaac Pereire

1881, Bourbon, 6 to 7 feet. Bright rose flowers are very full and fragrant. Primarily a spring bloomer. Susceptible to black spot, but a classic bloom.

Maggie

Found rose, 6 to 8 feet. Red, fragrant flowers that repeat well during the summer.

Paul Neyron

1869, Hybrid Perpetual, 4 to 6 feet. Largest flowers of the class at 7 inches. They are very double, dark pink, and very fragrant. This variety also has very few thorns. Good spring and fall bloom.

Variegata di Bologna

1909, Bourbon, 4 to 7 feet. Distinctive striped flowers are well scented. Flowers are white streaked with pale purple.