



Contribution Information Sheet

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Abstract: Cindy give some practical advice on where to collect your information on that next rose you think you want to purchase. She explains what information you get from the *ARS Handbook for Selecting Roses* and the *Horizon Roses* publication.

How to be an Informed Rose Buyer

Cindy Dale, S.M.R.S. Vice President and Consulting Rosarian

This is the time when we take stock of our gardens. We decide which beauties to keep and which under-achievers to “shovel prune.” Then the rose suppliers start tempting us by mailing the 2010 catalogs and we must carefully choose the additions for the year. How do we know which ones perform the best? You can't rely on the catalog photos. Those pictures were taken at the exact second the bloom was in its most perfect form and we may never see that again with that particular rose. You can't rely on the supplier's descriptions because they are frequently exaggerated. The best thing to do is to talk to local rosarians who have grown that variety and get their thoughts. But, what if no one has grown that rose? Then we turn to two very special, ARS-backed pamphlets to help us decide.

The 2010 ARS *Handbook for Selecting Roses* (HSR) came out recently as did the current edition of *Horizon Roses*. Both can help you be a discerning rose shopper. You may ask, “Why do I need two sources that rate rose varieties?” There are at least three good reasons based on the differences in the publications:

HSR ratings are done annually by over 1,400 rosarians belonging to local rose societies who may or may not have much rose-growing experience and may or may not be familiar with the qualities that make a good show rose versus a good garden rose. However, there is a likelihood of a higher statistical accuracy based on the large number of raters. This is why ARS and the local societies stress that ALL members do “Roses in Review,” which is how the ratings are obtained. The pamphlet covers over 3,000 roses. *Horizon Roses* rates a much smaller number of roses and uses a smaller number of raters but they are all very experienced rosarians, mostly Consulting Rosarians, and top exhibitors. I was honored to be asked to be a rater last year.

Another difference is that HSR only rates roses that have been in commerce for at least 2 years while *Horizon Roses* looks at even newer varieties. Some of the roses they rate are still “test roses” and haven't even made it to market yet. If you want to be informed about “cutting edge” varieties, read *Horizon Roses*.

The third difference in the two publications is that HSR uses numerical ratings on a scale of one to ten in addition to a few verbatim comments while *Horizon Roses* does not use the numerical scale and has in-depth comments from each rater that cover most negative and positive aspects of the variety. Frequently, you will get conflicting opinions. Remember, rose growing is an art, not an exact science. In that case, I usually try to find a reviewer who lives closest to me, figuring their conditions are more like mine, and go with either that one or the consensus opinion.

One publication does not take the place of the other. Rather, they complement each other to arm you with the information you need. With their

information you can confidently make your list of roses to purchase for the growing season. Remember, "The early bird gets the worm" and you need to place your order now for the popular or hard-to-find varieties before they are all sold out. Order now and tell the supplier when you want the bushes delivered, then relax, knowing you've got the best varieties reserved while everyone is scrambling to find what they want.

The Handbook for Selecting Roses is complimentary as part of an American Rose Society membership and was included with the September/October issue of *American Rose* magazine. Non-members can call ARS at 800-637-6534 or e-mail them at www.ars.org and order a copy for \$5.00.

Horizon Roses can be ordered by sending \$10.00 to Johnny Premeaux at 700 Westbury in Orange, TX 77630. Pay with a check made out to him.