

episode 58 show notes and advice

NEW EPISODE: Sarah is joined by her wonderful head gardener, Josie Lewis, to talk all about roses! When Josie arrived at Perch Hill nine years ago, she brought her incredible passion and knowledge of roses, steering Sarah towards varieties she knew to be naturally healthy, long-flowering and easy to grow.

Sarah and Josie chat about their favourite roses for scent and colour, to train along a wall or to take to the moon! If you love roses and want to learn more about which varieties to choose, and how to grow them, don't miss this week's episode.

In this episode, discover:

- How Sarah and Josie grow beautiful and healthy roses at Perch Hill
- Their favourite roses by colour including white '[Madame Alfred Carrière](#)', pale pink '[Aphrodite](#)' and [café au lait 'Koko Loko'](#)
- Josie's pick of the ramblers and climbers and her Sissinghurst method of training them
- Sarah's tips for picking roses for the vase

Episode 58 advice sheet

Sarah credits Josie with taking her back to roses. Sarah started out loving roses, especially two she came to know in the garden at Sissinghurst:

- 'Madame Gregoire Staechelin' – an early flowering, soft pink scented climbing rose.
- 'Madame Isaac Pereire' – a climber with full, ruffled, rich pink flowers and massive scent.

But she was put off growing roses at Perch Hill after hers were plagued with blackspot and mildew. Under Josie, they now have more than 60 rose varieties, ranging from climbers and hedge roses to species shrubs and heavily perfumed bush roses in the rose garden.

For Josie, the rose is such a quintessential British flower, and her top favourite, with so many marvellous scents, colours and forms. She didn't grow up with roses on her farm in Wales, but she did appreciate the beautiful dog roses in the hedgerows, followed by the rosehips she would forage with her Swiss mother to make into syrups. One day she was hit

by the amazing scent of Rosa 'Roseraie de l'Hay', walking by a row of front gardens. This sparked her love of roses and ever since she has planted them everywhere she lived and worked.

What's behind the price

Roses are expensive but it takes 10 years of work to get a rose to the public. Breeders look for good characteristics and begin cross pollinating different varieties. A good breeder like David Austin will have 350,000 seedlings a year which will get weeded down to 5 possible new roses. Disease-resistant plants are a top priority for breeders as the public move more in favour of biodiversity and away from using pesticides in their gardens.

Favourite climbers and ramblers

['The Simple Life'](#) - a lovely, more glamorous form of a wild rose, with single flowers and beautiful anthers in peachy pink. Josie's favourite small climber, not more than 2.5m high, planted at Perch Hill in the soft-coloured Farmhouse Garden. This is good for training on frames or hoops.

Josie's method of training roses

Borrowed from the Sissinghurst method. Cut whippy hazel sticks long enough to hold rose stems – about 2 to 2 1/2m. Push both ends into the ground to form a semi-circle hoop then tie the roses to it. This provokes buds to shoot upwards and will create fountains of roses. You can form the hoops into circles or any shape you like – at Perch Hill they ran like a criss-cross hedge down the Farmhouse Garden.

[Learn more about Josie's method](#)

- ['Alchymist'](#) – Sarah adores this rose which she first planted in the Colour Cutting Garden at RHS Chelsea Flower Show in 2017. It flowers prolifically in early summer with the most delicious scent and variation in colour from peach to apricot. It's healthy and vigorous, (but not too much so), almost the perfect medium sized rose for training on a wall. (unfortunately this is out of stock on our website, discover other roses at sarahraven.com)
- 'Francis E. Lester' – Josie's pick for a whopper rambling rose to grow up a tree. Up to 6m with pretty, single flowers, almost like apple blossom, an amazing fragrance and very healthy.

- 'Wedding Day' – a large, rambling rose producing large trusses of single, creamy white blooms en masse in summer. It's a vigorous variety, which is ideal for covering large, high walls, scrambling up the outside of the house or for rambling through a tree. In Sarah's parents' garden, this grew up a lilac tree then along the roof of a barn – the whole courtyard would be perfumed with scent when in flower.

Roses by colour

White/cream

- ['Madame Alfred Carrière'](#) – Sarah is very fond of this rose she first got to know at Sissinghurst. An incredible grower, with lovely clusters of warm-white, double flowers, sometimes with a soft pink blush. Flowers profusely and healthily for months. Very fragrant and tolerates a north-facing position.
- ['Champagne Moment'](#) – Josie isn't a fan of white so has picked this beautiful blush-ivory rose, incredible scent and a long-flowering season. Excellent as a cut flower.

Pink

- ['Aphrodite'](#) – this rose starts off with perfect pink rosebuds then opens into the most wonderful, over the top rose. Sarah calls it the Marshmallow for its soft and pillowy flowers. Ideal for growing in a container, but also works well in a border and as a cut flower. Repeat flowers.

Deep red/purple

- ['Timeless Purple'](#) – an award-winning rose that is a vigorous bloomer - excellent for cutting, intensely fragrant, and incredibly healthy. It's a superb garden plant, grown in the border or in a large pot.
- 'Charles de Mills' – a rose Sarah has grown since her first garden in London, flowers once in June to July and the velvet texture, along with the incredible scent, make this a must-have. Spectacular, deep plum-pink flowers and very healthy bright green foliage. A wayward self-propagator, with runners forming new bushes about a metre away.

Mauve and café au lait

- 'Honey Dijon' – Josie's pick – the unusual colour is as it sounds. Long-flowering, disease-resistant and has been bred for picking.

- ['Koko Loko'](#) – Sarah loves this very classy rose, similar in colour to the tulip 'La Belle Epoque' – a milky coffee colour touched with mauve and beautiful in a vase. A good garden performer.

Orange and yellow

- 'Scent from Heaven' – a divisive rose that Josie and visitors to Perch Hill love. A short, vigorous climber that's good to run along a fence.

Josie's take to the moon rose

- ['Hot Chocolate'](#) – Josie's absolute favourite with a lovely copper brown colour, covered in flowers, a vase life of four days and decent scent.

Sarah's take to the moon rose

- [Rosa x odorata 'Mutabilis'](#) - a classic China rose which flowers on and off for six months. Its name comes from the Latin for changing – opening pink and fading to apricot. A top border filler favourite at Perch Hill.

Josie's top rose tips

- If you haven't finished pruning roses, try to get this done before leaves start emerging. Aim to create good airflow to keep disease at bay. Remove diseased and weak stems (thinner than a pencil's width).
- Mulching is so important and much better than using fertiliser. Mulch with organic matter - farmyard manure is ideal or homemade compost.
- If you are establishing a rose, water frequently – a good full watering can per rose.
- The later you leave planting roses, the more high maintenance they will be. The aim is to get deep roots down before high summer. You can plant all through the flowering season and if you buy container roses in spring, a good tip is to let the roots fill the container before planting out.
- Salvias are excellent companion plants for roses. They release a natural fungicide helping to combat blackspot and attract pollinators and beneficial insects that eat aphids. At Perch Hill a range of salvias are grown beneath the roses and for more information listen to podcast [episode 43 growing spectacular salvias](#).
- It's important to make sure that the 'union' of the rose (the point at which the rootstock meets the graft, which looks like a knee) is slightly below soil level. Lay a bamboo cane across the top of the hole to ensure it is, if it isn't, dig the hole more

deeply. This is crucial. If the union is above soil level, you promote the formation of suckers from the root material. These may then outgrow the grafted rose on top. For a complete growing guide to roses - [How to Plant, Grow & Care for Roses | Sarah Raven](#)

Picking roses

Remove leaves from stems, especially those under the waterline. Roses last very well in the vase with stem ends seared in boiling water for 10-20 seconds depending on how thick and woody they are.

Sarah finds shorter stems last better. She makes noughts and crosses grid and props this over a bowl and plops roses into the spaces.

How to make a noughts and crosses grid

- Lay out four canes or straight lengths of willow or dogwood picked in the garden, with another four at right angles
- Tie them at all the crossovers with knots all in the same direction. With the knots all facing the same way, you can fold the grid away like a wine rack and put it away in a draw when not in use.
- We Use Flexi-tie. Tied very tightly, the slightly elastic Flexi-tie, holds the stems fast, which shrink as they dry.

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