

## **Australian Rose Award 2014 DAvid Austin**

According to the National Rose Society of Australia's constitution, the Australian Rose Award can be presented to any person whom the Society deems to have given outstanding service in a way whatsoever to the Rose.

In particular, any service, which promotes knowledge, appreciation and enjoyment of the rose by the public, shall be regarded as highly meritorious.

During 1991 a selection of roses, both released and still to be released roses were sent to Australia. These roses, bred in the United Kingdom, included cultivars such as Graham Thomas, Heritage and Mary Rose.

This was the start of an incredible relationship Australians would enjoy with a new series of roses – introduced as “English Roses by David Austin”.

Mr Austin's emphasis has been on breeding roses with the character and fragrance of old garden roses (such as gallicas, damasks and alba roses) but with the repeat-flowering ability and wide colour range of modern roses such as hybrid teas and floribundas.

Since its founding in 1969, he and his firm David Austin Roses in Albrighton, near Wolverhampton, have introduced over 190 rose cultivars. Cultivars have been named in honour of his family, well-known rosarians, geographical landmarks in Britain, historical events, and British writers, particularly Shakespeare and Chaucer, and their works or characters. For instance, roses have honoured such diverse entities as the rosarian and artist Graham Thomas and King Henry VIII's flagship, the Mary Rose.

In the twenty-first century, Austin separated his roses into four groups as a guide to further developments. The four groups are:

- the Old Rose Hybrids, roses with the appearance of the Old Roses but recurrent, healthy and with a wide range of colours
- the Leander Group, often with *Rosa wichurana* in their breeding, with larger bushes and arching growth tending to make them pillar or low climbing roses
- the English Musk Roses, based on 'Iceberg' and the Noisette roses, with pale green, slender and airy growth. The musk rose scent is missing from most, though other scents are present in many.
- the English Alba Hybrids, with tall, rather blue-leaved bushes like the old Alba roses.

These English roses, with their long flowering season, grew very well under Australian conditions, providing modern shrubs for rose borders, climbers and containers plants, in addition to a range of cut flowers used extensively in bridal bouquets.

It is reported that English Roses provide a variety of rich fragrances, including the beautiful Old Rose fragrance, the Tea Rose, Musk Rose and also the fragrance of myrrh, and a whole variety of other fragrances; making them a group of flowers, unrivalled in this respect.

Austin's Roses, having become so popular with Australian gardeners, have been included in plantings within the following public rose gardens - the Mornington Botanical Rose Garden, VIC., Morwell Centenary Rose Garden, VIC., National Rose Garden, Longford, TAS., Old Parliament House Rose Garden, Canberra, ACT., Ruston Rose Garden, Renmark, SA., The Queensland State Rose Garden, Toowoomba, QLD and the Victoria State Rose Garden, Weribee, VIC. Each State Rose Society also includes Austin's in its list of Recommended Roses in the Australian Rose Annual.

David Austin's influence on rose breeding trends was acknowledged with an OBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours List in 2007, and during 2010 he was honoured as a Great Rosarian of the World. In 2003, David Austin was awarded the Victoria Medal of Honour by the Royal Horticultural Society for his services to horticulture and the Dean Hole Medal from the Royal National Rose Society.

His roses are grown throughout the world, and he was delighted when his 'Graham Thomas' received the highest accolade in the rose world, when it was voted the World's Favourite Rose by the World Federation of Rose Societies. The award was announced at the 2009 World Rose Convention in Vancouver, when the rose was inducted into the Society's 'Rose Hall of Fame'.

With in excess of 150 different varieties available in Australia, one rose nursery currently lists almost 70 different cultivars in its 2014 Rose Catalogue.

Through the introduction of these much loved new roses in the old theme, David Austin has captured the imagination of a new generation of Australian rose lovers.

I believe that David C. H. Austin has definitely broadened the knowledge and enjoyment of rose growing in Australia and is certainly worthy of the Australian Rose Award.