

Client: Perennial Yellow News
Source: Evening Standard
Date: 17/07/2019
Page: 22
Reach: 867325
Value: 60253.1000

Yellow News...

Roses are tougher than you think

Alex Mitchell



Plant a meadow of roses, grasses and perennials mixed together for a wild look. It's a great low-maintenance idea for small London gardens

ROSES don't have to be grown in their own bed — let them mingle with your other flowering plants and treat them just the same, cutting them to the ground in late winter each year. A "rose meadow" is a brilliant new low-maintenance idea for small London gardens, allowing you to pack in masses of gorgeous scented flowers without faffing about deadheading, pruning or training.

An award-winner at the Chelsea Flower Show in May demonstrated how it's done. The Perennial Lifeline Garden designed by Colm Joseph and Duncan Cargill had roses growing around and among ornamental grasses and flowering perennials to create a naturalistic, scented, colourful meadow contrasting with sharp, contemporary metal screens and hornbeam hedges.

Many of Joseph's clients want low-maintenance gardens so he developed the rose meadow idea to get away from the classic labour-intensive herbaceous border. "Historically, roses have been grown in isolation," Joseph says, "but they

don't grow like that in the wild. This approach is an alternative." Everyone loves roses but beginners can be confused by their myriad forms, from ramblers to shrub, patio and species. The best thing about a rose meadow is that those categories don't matter since you cut the roses right back to the base each year. "You don't need to differentiate between shrub, climbers, ramblers and species roses," says Joseph. "The common denominator is that they are tough, robust and vigorous growers."

GET THE RATIO RIGHT

As long as you check with the nursery that a rose can handle being cut back hard every year, then it's an ideal candidate for a rose meadow. Specialist rose grower Peter Beales supplied the Perennial Garden and is a great place to start.

Most of the more vigorous growing roses tend to have simple, open flowers for the romantic, naturalistic look. Overbred multi-petalled blooms wouldn't recover from such a brutal annual cut-back. Besides, such frou-frou flowers wouldn't look the part.

For a rose meadow in your garden plant a mix of roughly a third roses, a third ornamental grasses and a third perennials into your flower bed, advises Joseph. You're aiming for a

base layer of clump-forming perennials and grasses, an ornamental layer of flashier flowering plants, annuals and bulbs, and a layer of roses left to grow naturally in among, sending out long stems that entwine with the other plants.

"You do have to be happy with a wilder, looser look," says Joseph. "If you're worried about a bit of blackspot here and there it's not for you." Not even deadheading? "No, you leave the flowers to fade naturally because they have great autumn foliage or beautiful winter hips."

Sit back and enjoy your rose meadow as it ages gracefully into winter and appreciate the structure of their stems, hips, the arching plumes of the grasses and the seedheads of the flowering perennials.

The birds and other wildlife will appreciate it, too. Then, in late winter, simply cut the whole lot to the ground with hedge trimmers or secateurs, so the roses are three or four inches tall, and give the whole bed a mulch of garden compost.

● **TO CONTROL the direction of long rose stems a bit as they grow, try "spider training", says Jenny Maddock of Plant Belles, which makes attractive rusted metal plant supports. Push Plant Crooks, pictured, into the ground (Tall**

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Plant Crooks, 110cm, £11 for a pack of four) and hook long rose stems into them to create scented rivers of blooms through your other plants, rather like a spider's legs. Horizontal stems always produce the most rose flowers, so you'll be in for a real spectacle.

Photographs:
Britt Willoughby Dyer



HOW TO MAKE A ROSE MEADOW

TIPS FROM COLM JOSEPH

AIM for a rough mix of a third perennials (with a few annuals and bulbs thrown in), a third grasses and a third roses. Here are some plants he recommends:

Perennials

Base layer: salvia nemerosa
Caradonna; nepeta

Ornamental layer:
persicaria, baptisia,
echinops, cirsium,
sanguisorba

Annuals: ammi majus,
orlaya grandiflora

Bulbs: camassia, narcissus

Grasses

Deschampsia cespitosa,
calamagrostis brachytricha,
Molinia, briza media

Roses

Purple Skyliner, Narrow
Water, Smarty, Alba
Semiplena, Rosa foliolos,
Rosa laxa, Open Arms,
Rosa glauca



GET THE LOOK

- **Commission Colm Joseph:** colmjoseph.co.uk
- **Roses:** from Peter Beales Roses (classicroses.co.uk)
- **Perennials:** hardysplants.co.uk
- **Perennial grow your own rose meadow kit:** £10 with 15% off voucher for Peter Beales Roses, plus poppy seeds (shop.perennial.org.uk)
- **Plant Crooks:** plantbelles.co.uk

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Ramble on: simple Rosa Narrow Water blooms, above, mingle well with grasses and perennials in a naturalistic rose meadow, below, created in the Silver-Gilt-winning Perennial Lifeline Garden at RHS Chelsea by Colm Joseph, right, and Duncan Cargill