

## Features

4/30/2025

## Built Tough

*Kathy Jentz*

Roses are notoriously high-maintenance plants, but despite their reputation everyone still wants them. Why? Simply because of their beauty and status as the queen of flowers. Roses enchant and delight. When in flower, they're stunning and their scents are swoon-worthy. Luckily, rose breeders have been hard at work making roses that are more disease resistant and lower maintenance, without sacrificing the beauty of the roses themselves. For garden centers who have landscape design or installation businesses, this new generation of tough roses can be part of their client's gardens and grounds.

Here are just some of the rose options for commercial landscapes that can withstand all kinds of adverse growing conditions.

### Oso Easy Lineup



**Oso Easy Double Pink Rose** is a triple award winner, which means it's been trialed across the country and came out on top as a beautiful, healthy and durable groundcover rose. A low grower, it tops out at 2-ft. tall and wide. **Oso Easy Peasy Rose** is another multiple award winner. This low, mounded shrub rose sends out sprays of tiny, dragonfruit-colored blooms in summer. When in full bloom, this rose is a mass of pink and a pollinator magnet. **Oso Easy Urban Legend Rose** earned a

Blue Ribbon designation from the UC-Davis Plant Irrigation Trials, along with other awards nationwide. In the trials, UC-Davis horticulturists evaluate landscape plants with the potential to be good performers in low-water use landscapes. **Oso Easy Urban Legend Rose** has open red blooms with bright yellow centers and grows to 2.5- to 3 -ft. tall and wide. All but Double Pink are hardy to Zone 4, while Double Pink is Zone 5.

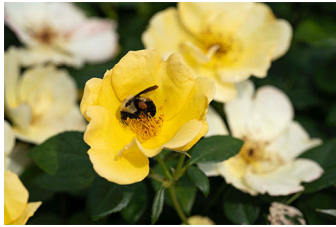
### Weeks Roses



Meanwhile from Weeks Roses, there are a couple of standouts for the landscape. **Easy on the Eyes** is a rounded shrub, covered with clusters of medium-pink flowers with magenta-purple hearts and cream reverse fading to light lavender with deep smoky-purple eye. The flowers have a scent that's citrus-like and spicy. It's extremely disease resistant. **Forever and Ever Pink** is a low-growing, spreading shrub full of small-ish pink flowers with a "mild tea" fragrance. The foliage is a deep

glossy green. **Top Gun** is a rounded, bushy well-behaved plant that produces vigorous stems ending with clusters of long-lasting dark-red flowers. This is a top-ranked flowering performer in the garden and outstanding clean foliage in most climates.

## Star Roses



You'll often see the original Knock Out or Double Knock Out at commercial sites all around the country, but the line now includes 12 varieties that cover a full range of needs. In 2024, Star Roses introduced two new stand-out roses to the lineup: **Easy Bee-zy Knock Out** and **Orange Glow Knock Out**. They're both blooming powerhouses with really excellent disease resistance—including rust resistance on the West Coast.

Star also has the Pretty Polly series that offers unmatched drought tolerance and cold hardiness. This dainty rose series is a great option for mixed landscapes with a light fragrance and awesome flower power from spring through fall that help them play well with perennials, woodies and other roses.

### Easy Elegance Roses/Bailey Nurseries



**All the Rage** is a cold-tolerant and disease-resistant variety and is an own-root rose with multi-colored flowers that start off as tight coral bud swirls that open to apricot-colored blossoms, accented by luminous yellow centers. This beautiful shrub rose blooms steadily all season, so there's always a range of colors to enjoy. The blooms age to lipstick pink before dropping cleanly away. **Music Box** is an own-root shrub rose that's highly disease resistant and cold tolerant. It's ever-blooming with double blossoms that have creamy yellow centers surrounded by delicate pink blends with glossy medium foliage.

**Sunrise Sunset** has blooms with bright fuchsia-pink petals blending to apricot near the centers. The blue-green foliage is disease resistant. This is an ever-blooming, vigorously growing own-root shrub rose. Its dense, spreading habit makes it an ideal groundcover and is also well suited to mass plantings. It performs extremely well in

both cool and warm climates.

Photo Credit: Easy Elegance Roses

## Care and Maintenance Tips

For installing and maintaining these roses in commercial landscapes, I asked several rose experts for their best rose care advice. Layci Gragnani, Brand & Business Development Manager at Bailey Nurseries, said, "Good soil is the best way to ensure long-term success with your new roses. Easy Elegance Roses send their roots deep and wide, so you want the best soil to ensure healthy growth. Roses prefer loamy, well-drained soil with a good amount of organic matter. Organic matter provides nutrients, increases nutrient-holding capacity, and improves drainage and airspace, all essential elements for good plant development."

Along with the soil, there are a few additional keys, noted Christian Bedard, director of research and licensing at Weeks Roses. "The first year, make sure you fertilize and water the plants enough so they can get established. Once the plants are established, they will perform with minimal care. Cut the plants down to 8 to 10 in. at proper pruning time for the region, remove dead and sick wood, add some basic fertilizer, and water adequately. That's all they need!"

Natalie Carmolli, public relations specialist with Proven Winners ColorChoice Shrubs, provided further basic care. She recommended giving new plants a deep soak to establish strong roots and also planting where roses will receive at least six hours of direct sun daily. She advised to avoid watering rose foliage from above and that a drip line is best.

“A single application of slow-release fertilizer in early spring is usually enough,” she added. “Pruning these new tough roses can be minimal—just remove dead or weak branches in early spring. No need to deadhead, but you can remove spent buds to encourage rebloom.”

Some final thoughts from Stephanie Waltz, rose trial coordinator at Star Roses and Plants. “When planting roses, you want to make sure you don’t bury them too deep or pile the mulch around the base too closely,” she said. “They benefit from a little breathing room around the base.

“In general, landscape shrubs are going to benefit from a good pruning in the late winter or early spring to maintain a compact size and good shape. They can be cut back by about one-third to one-half of their total height, as far down as 12 in. off the ground for the Knock Out Rose.” **GP**

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