

Easy-Tea™ Hybrid Tea Roses from articles written by Claude Graves

We are all aware of the EarthKind™ Rose Research project which began at the Texas A&M Extension Research Center in Richardson, Texas. The EarthKind Rose research identified a group of extremely disease-resistant rose cultivars through testing for a five-year period without fungicides, insecticides, fertilizers or soil amendments for the entire test term and with no irrigation other than rain after the second year. The only "care" the roses received was to maintain a depth of three inches of hardwood mulch in the beds.

We are all familiar with the EarthKind program and Dr. Steve George, who has wandered the earth with the stories of these roses. It is an amazing story. The original test group began with 117 cultivars; eleven roses survived the rigors of the test. Those roses were always familiar faces to the members of this group, and now the world knows them. As Claude points out, these extremely low-care roses have created many thousands of successful new rose growers.

The original Earth Kind test did include a number of hybrid tea roses; however, none of the Hybrid Teas survived through the second year of the tough "no care" regime of the EarthKind test. Further testing, notably the tests by Dr. Mark Windham at the University of Tennessee, have confirmed these results. They tested 162 modern rose cultivars

(claimed to be disease-resistant by their growers), and none of them passed the No-Spray tests.

Few if any Hybrid Tea roses can be grown with clean foliage without some help to control fungal leaf diseases. Claude relates that his personal experience and observations indicate that there are some Hybrid Tea roses which are genetically superior to other Hybrid Tea roses. Just like horses.

The genetically superior Hybrid Tea roses might not thrive with no care, but they would flourish with just a minimal amount of intervention with fungicides. The Easy-Tea Hybrid Tea Research Program was conceived to evaluate this hypothesis and to try to identify those Hybrid Tea roses which exhibit superior tolerance to fungal disease to the extent that they can be grown well with only a very minimal fungicide program. The Easy-Tea Hybrid Tea rose research is a logical follow-on to the EarthKind testing program.

The Easy-Tea Hybrid Tea Rose Research is intended to provide an easy pathway for the thousands of current EarthKind rose enthusiasts to take the next step to grow hybrid tea roses, the queen of roses. The Easy-Tea Hybrid Tea rose cultivars identified in this new research program will give these budding new rosarians a list of scientifically tested, easy to grow, hybrid tea rose cultivars to grow, along with a proven minimal fungicide program of low environmental impact with which to care for them.

(The American Rose Society headquartered in Shreveport, Louisiana, is taking the lead in sponsoring this important hybrid tea research. The American Rose Center, with its

acidic, sandy soils will be the initial test site for a four-year, randomized replicated block, scientific research study to identify the most disease-tolerant Hybrid Tea roses. An additional test site will soon be announced to provide testing in heavy alkaline clay soils. The testing will be conducted by Dr. Allen Owings of the LSU AgCenter, in conjunction with Dr. Steve George of Texas AgriLife Extension Service, who was the founder of the EarthKindO Rose Research. Results of the American Rose Society-supported testing will be published nationally and world-wide to provide rose growers with the names of the most environmentally responsible Hybrid Tea roses. Claude asks that all be aware that these tests are not designed to find roses that never get blackspot.

They are looking for rose cultivars that - with the support of a minimal systemic fungicide program - will, when infected, have the natural ability to drop only a small percentage of leaves and recover without intervention from the grower. The initial focus will be on blackspot, as that is the most common problem in all but the most arid parts of the country. Pending the success of the initial study, it is anticipated that additional research at the American Rose Center and other locations around the United States will evaluate other more regional problems pertaining to soil composition and diseases related to climatic variables.