

### In My Garden, June

*Would Jove appoint some flower to reign;  
In matchless beauty on the plain;  
The rose (mankind will all agree);  
The rose the queen of flowers should be...*

SAPPHO.

I always promised you a rose garden... The carcass of a roofless shed removed, its foundation enlarged then gravelled, it catches the first morning sun. Above this breakfast terrace a bed for miniature roses. Posts, rails and wires for climbers, pergolas add height and vertical accents, and perhaps vaguely an old-fashioned 1950's appearance. Looking stark when first erected though quickly hidden under flower and foliage an ex-neighbour rather cruelly, although aptly, described it as "a Japanese prisoner of war camp". The structured layout to the area would be a contrast to the informality in the rest of the garden; there would be tall growing perennials: phlox, Verbena, geraniums, iris, asters and dahlias in between the bush roses to add different colours and textures.

A large Deutzia to break the monotony of roses. 'Pompom de Paris' rambles amongst its branches. The little pink rosette flowers of this delicate China rose blooms amongst the white powder puffs of the Deutzia then flushes again late summer when its over and pruned back. Box for its scent and evergreen interest, bulbs adding colour out of season. Shrub and species roses would be planted around the perimeter trickling out into the rest of the garden (there already existed a huge Rosa 'Highdownensis' and a whole row of wild briars) to give a sense of continuity and inclusion with the garden as a whole; a balanced feeling of adjunction yet separation from the general garden scheme.

So what varieties should be planted? Not quite so straight forward as leafing through a catalogue choosing pretty flowers; good health and disease resistance is a primary concern. Roses prone to particular ailments, blackspot for example, are lepers attracting these diseases acting as reservoirs of infection, sumps of contamination, easily transferable to less susceptible plants. Also, I am restricted to rain tolerant varieties flourishing in cool climates. Good stems for cutting are desirable, roses I remembered from my childhood, roses my father and grandmother grew, modern and newer varieties too. I wanted a co-ordinated yet informal scheme avoiding a mishmash of too many different types and styles.

Definitely, however, to avoid at any cost the municipal park vision of monocultural block planted jarring borders full of reds, pinks, oranges, yellows; that has been described as "The full hideousity of the rose-bed".

Warm dry spells over the next few weeks will bring great activity in the surrounding fields as every landowner is in a frenzy to get on with silage cutting or making hay. Either for meteorological or financial reasons the window for cutting is often short. Fields richly Buckingham green transformed to eau de Nil as mowing machines scalp them. The air, especially in the evening, carries that dreamy summer scent of drying grass mixed with aromatic elder blossom and sweetest honeysuckle too. This most delicious combination must be utterly unique to our British Isles; romantic, Shakespearian; a woodbine, eglantine, musk rose, time of year; merrie England reeking of itself.

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