



NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

Visalia Heritage: the Miniature Rose (June 15, 2024)

by Nancy Hawkins, Tulare/Kings Counties Master Gardener

Visalia has almost 40 parks, but one of its perhaps lesser-known jewels is the Ralph Moore Memorial Rose Garden on the corner of Main and Hall Streets.

Ralph Moore

Ralph Moore was born on January 14, 1907, in Visalia, California. His father was a commercial vegetable grower, and Mr. Moore was first introduced to roses in his grandparent's garden in Visalia. He graduated from the local high school and enrolled in Visalia Junior College. He later attended the University of California, Davis, and began experimenting with breeding roses during his holidays from school.

Mr. Moore enjoyed working with small roses. He later decided to develop and sell miniature roses. In 1937, he opened Sequoia Nursery in Visalia, where he bred and sold mostly roses. He played an important role in the return to popularity of miniature roses, which had been abandoned by rose breeders and gardeners in the 19th century. Mr. Moore is known by many of his peers as the "Father of the Modern Miniature Rose."

On January 14, 2007, Mr. Moore celebrated his 100th birthday at the Visalia Convention Center. He received an award from the Royal National Rose Society of Great Britain and the American Rose Society. He also received the flag flown over the United States Capitol on January 8, 2007, in his honor. On September 14, 2009, Ralph Moore died at the age of 102 of natural causes in Visalia.

On April 30, 2008, his retail rose business, Sequoia Nursery, closed. Mr. Moore gave his plants and breeding stock, and 80 rose patents, to Texas A&M University's horticultural sciences department. A metal sculpture of roses climbing an arbor is located near the Horticultural and Forestry Sciences Building to honor his work. Some of his most popular miniatures were sent to the Rose collections maintained by the University of California at Davis. Burling Leone, at her nursery south of Farmersville, has much of the original rootstock and is able to supply new stock when needed.



Ralph Moore Memorial Rose Garden

The Ralph Moore Memorial Rose Garden was established in 2003 and dedicated to Ralph Moore on May 29, 2003. This garden has over 300 of his roses, from climbers, tree roses, bushes, and creepers. When you come to the rose garden, take time to smell the roses and notice their names. Since he was the one who developed the roses, he had the privilege of naming them. They are named after his wife, daughters, friends and others he chose to honor. His "Ann Moore," named after his wife, is one of his award-winning roses.

Rosarians from around the world know Ralph Moore's name and accomplishments. To rosarians, Ralph Moore put Visalia on the map! We, as Visalians, have acknowledged his accomplishments by honoring him with this garden. Norm Phillips, a local teacher and Master Gardener, was instrumental in ensuring this garden was built in Visalia. The garden is maintained by the City of Visalia Parks and Recreation Department and Tulare/Kings Counties Master Gardeners. As Master Gardeners, we use this garden to learn, demonstrate, and share gardening knowledge with the public.



What is a Miniature Rose

So, what is a miniature rose and why is it so special? Miniature roses are members of the rose family but they are dwarf (miniature) in every respect. The leaves, flowers, roots, thorns, bushes, and even the space between the leaves, are all miniature. They can resemble the floribunda roses with clusters of flowers or, they can resemble tea roses, which have a single flower on a stem. They can climb or creep or be a bush or tree. There are even teeny dwarf miniatures!

How to Care for Miniature Roses



Because miniature roses are still roses, their care is similar to the care you would give to a other roses. They require sunlight and some pruning. Because of their smaller root systems, proper irrigation is very important.

Like regular roses, they are susceptible to a variety of plant diseases and pests, including powdery mildew, rust, black spot, anthracnose, mites and aphids. UC Ag and Natural Resources offers an integrated approach to treatments for these problems. Management techniques include choosing varieties and irrigation practices carefully, promoting air circulation by correct pruning and plant spacing, and removing severely infested material promptly. Careful monitoring during our hot summer months is important. Spraying with water or a soap solution may be helpful. Chemicals, such as fungicides and pesticides, should be used only as a last resort, always following label directions.

Because they are smaller, pruning is a little easier on the hands, but since they are lower to the ground, harder on backs and knees! The method of pruning is similar to pruning larger roses. Cut out dead wood, overlapping and crowded branches. Create an open or vase-like structure that allows air circulation into the center of the plant. You should not prune away more than one third of the growth. Prune miniatures, like larger roses, in the winter (between Christmas and Valentine's Day).

Finally

Ralph Moore has written three books about roses, *All About Miniature Roses* (limited availability on Amazon), *The Breeding and Development of Modern Moss Roses* (out of print), and *Thoughts of Roses: A Collection of Poems* (also out of print). One of his poems I'll share here:

In my little spot of ground, the Lord has given me
To test some of his roses and set their spirits free
Freedom has many faces. Some we'd like to enjoy
But freedom can come to us with a price we must pay
So freedom can be costly of time, money, devotion
But the joy of giving makes life worth living

Ralph Moore made a distinct and lasting impression on the world of roses, but nothing compared to the impression his knowledge, generosity and character made on all who knew him. Please take time to visit the Ralph Moore Memorial Rose Garden with the knowledge of the contribution Ralph Moore has made to the city of Visalia.

The Tulare-Kings Counties Master Gardeners will answer your questions in person:

Visalia Farmer's Market, 1st & 3rd Saturdays, 8 - 11 am, Tulare Co. Courthouse North parking lot
Sat., June 15 - "How to Grow Tomatoes", Tulare Public Library, Tulare, 11 am - Noon

Questions? Call the Master Gardeners:

Tulare County: (559) 684-3325, Tues & Thurs, 9:30-11:30;

Kings County: (559) 852-2736, Thursday Only, 9:30-11:30 a.m

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