

## A Rose By Any Other Name

One recent morning, when Dennis Thompson MD arrived at his office bearing a dozen smashing roses, his staff chided him for not having brought a larger bouquet.

Lest you think that Dr. Thompson's employees are a collection of hard-boiled ingrates, consider this: Rare is the morning when he doesn't arrive bearing bag upon bag of fresh roses, sometimes ninety stunning flowers at once, each blossom plucked from his own bountiful home garden.

A plastic, aesthetic, and reconstructive surgeon, Dr. Thompson raises the roses as a mean of combating stress. As an added benefit, the hobby decorates his workplace. With so many flowers blooming about the office – sometimes up to two hundred on sumptuous display – Dr. Thompson's reception and waiting rooms become indoor gardens, exhibiting such specimens as baby roses, seven-inch roses, forty-petal roses, climber roses, rambler roses, high-center cupped roses, hybrid roses, tea roses, Mister Lincoln roses, and more.

Two hundred roses mean dozens of different flashes of color. Anybody using mere words to try to do justice to so many astounding tints and hues is asking for it, but here's a modest list of some of the colors on view at Dr. Thompson's Santa Monica office: golden butterscotch, lime green, fiery red, bluish pink, night black, cupped yellow, velvet coral, and dramatic crimson.

"Won't you come into my garden?" inquired Richard Brinsley Sheridan, an 18<sup>th</sup> century rose bard. "I would like my roses to see you."

Dr Thompson's roses, some eighty bushes strong, can see and be seen on the slopes of his Woodland Hills, California, property.

"Because it's relaxing," he replies to the question of what motivates him to get out there regularly and prune, rake, spray, fertilize, and drip-irrigate.

No, Dr. Thompson continues, he's not a horticulturist or botanist, and his only rose guru, as it were, is his mother-in-law, who twenty years ago put him in touch with what Hildegard Flanner, another poet of the flower, calls the "gentle mercy" of the rose.

Dr Thompson's skilled finger prints are all over his plants. They are in blooming, vigorous health, and he speaks of them as if they were a second clientele of patients.

"Genetically speaking," he says, "roses are like human beings in at least one regard: Some plants just happen to be stronger than others. For example, I have one wonderful old floribunda which is so prolific I can count on one hundred buds a year. I also have a hybrid tear rose which bears no more than four to six flowers a year, but those are an especially delicate lime green."

Rosa, as a genus is about ten times as old as the human race and, consequently, has had the opportunity to become relatively robust through the millennia. Yet roses come under terrible and unpredictable attacks from an especially nasty-sounding tribe of enemies: aphids, beetles, slugs, caterpillars, earwigs, carpenter bees, spider mites, and the ubiquitous gopher.

And, as in many medical practices, Dr. Thompson also wages a nonstop war against seasonal onslaughts of infection, lesions, canker, bacteria, and mildew warts. His roses keep him busy.

Roughly speaking, rose season runs from early March to the end of December, with a succession of blooms at approximately six-week intervals. Eighty plants assure a non-stop riot of color.

After harvesting the bounty every few mornings, Dr. Thompson arrives at the office bearing bags of blooms for office manager Laura Faye, receptionist Ann Kern, and the rest of his staff to enthusiastically de-torn and arrange beautiful effect.

And every four days, they renovate the look with a new crop faithfully delivered by the grower himself. !1996)

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