A Greener View: Rose show and bulbs

by Jeff_Rugg

When Shakespeare wrote that a rose by any other name would smell as sweet, he could not have known what would become of the rose. Roses are one of the most sought-after plants in gardens anywhere in the world. If you have been bitten by the rose bug, then you may want to begin planning a trip to Vancouver, Canada from June 19-21. The Vancouver Rose Society is hosting the 2009 World Rose Show right in the middle of the World Rose Convention that runs from the 18th through the 24th. As they say on TV, that's not all: The American Rose Society is having its national convention at the same time and place.

The convention has lectures, social events and daily tours. The World Rose Festival has its own set of speakers, exhibits and floral displays, including an internationally judged rose show. If you are so inclined, you can even bring your own roses to have them judged in the cut rose competition or the floral design arrangement competition. Complete instructions on how to enter a rose are at worldrosefestival.com. If you enter roses in your local county or state fair, it would be worth reading the instructions, to get a few extra tips.

The two dozen convention speakers come from countries like China, Denmark, France, Italy, New Zealand and South Africa. Tours include rose gardens, of course, but also the famous Butchart Gardens, the VanDusen Botanical Gardens and the University of British Columbia's Botanical Garden. Other tours include fjords, glaciers and whale watching.

Who would want to go to a convention if it didn't include a dinner reception at the Museum of Anthropology or a sunset dinner cruise? No one, so both are included. The weeklong convention pass costs $449, but if you can only go for a few days, the three-day pass is $349. The convention passes included the World Rose Festival admission, but tours and dinners are extra. If you are only interested in the Rose Festival, a three-day pass is only $49 and a one-day ticket is just $18. More information on the rose show is at worldrose-vancouver2009.com

If you can't make it to the event in Canada, there may be a national or regional rose convention, workshop or seminar near you. Check the American Rose Society events page on their website at www.ars.org. The Rose Society is made up of many local rose clubs and societies, so there is probably one near you.

Q: I want to start my summer bulbs early. I have canna, dahlia, elephant ear and others that I over-wintered in a cool basement. Some of them have started to sprout an inch or two. I have a sunny room I can put them in. Since they are going to be temporarily in pots before I plant them in the garden, do I have to use potting soil and real pots, or can I just set them on some trays with water to get the roots started?

A: The elephant ear bulbs can tolerate several inches of water, but will probably sprout better if they are started in damp soil. You don't have to get full-fledged potting soil for such a temporary planting. You could try straight peat moss, perlite, vermiculite composted organic matter or any combination of them.

You can start them all on a tray, but they will need more support from a deeper root system after a short time, so you should use at least 4 to 6 inches of soil mix. You don't have to use real pots. Milk jugs cut in half or other types of food containers will work just fine for a temporary and recyclable pot.

Summer bulbs including lilies, gladiolas, begonias, calla, tuberose and others all need to be planted in the garden at about the same time as tomatoes. When you see the dry bulbs for sale at the store, go ahead and buy them for a better selection. Then pot them up four to six weeks in advance of when you can plant the tomatoes in your area. When it is time to plant, you will have bulbs that are way ahead of ones that are just getting planted in the ground at that time.

They need soil that is at least 60 degrees before they go in the ground. Once planted, they are perennials that can stay in the ground unless the soil will freeze in the winter. The exception to this rule is the lilies that can survive the frosty soil.

If you like gladiolas, you might want to try planting several in a small group and then planting more a week later. You can keep planting them each week until mid-summer. This will give you many weeks of blooms. Each variety will mature at a different rate, so look at the package to see you how long it takes for them to bloom. Stop planting that many weeks before your first average killing freeze in the fall.

Don't plant them in rows because they are too spread out and if one falls over it throws the whole view out of balance. Groups of flowers will have more impact on the scene.

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