

This is a printer friendly version of an article from thenewsstar.com
To print this article open the file menu and choose Print.

[Back](#)

Article published Nov 30, 2007
The Birds and the Bees
Gardening with Waco Bankston

by Waco Bankston,
visit www.LearnToGarden.net

Did your parents teach you about the birds and the bees? If not, this month's column is for you!

The educational event I'm speaking of involved two rose gardening celebrities being in our midst here in Northeast Louisiana – Eddie Edwards, a nationally-renown rose exhibitor and hybridizer, and Marilyn Wellan, the immediate past president of the national organization, The American Rose Society (www.ars.org). In Eddie's presentation the focus was on creating new roses and the processes involved. A rose hybridizer is one who creates new roses from parent roses. I'm not talking about rooting a rose or other forms of asexual plant propagation, but rather am referring to sexual propagation. This is the science of cross-pollinating one rose flower with another followed by retrieving the seeds and planting them. This science includes human intervention and the elaborate study of the two parents' attributes and genetics. Sexual propagation occurs naturally in the wild, but when humans intervene and cross-pollinate parents that have near perfect genetics the resulting offspring will likely carry some of those “perfections” with them. This can result in new hybrid varieties of roses, daylilies or other flowering plants. However, I caution you-hybridizing is not for the impatient-it's a long and somewhat complicated affair often involving years of trial and error to achieve the perfect specimen plant and flower. One could compare wine making to rose hybridizing – it requires time, talent and the strive for perfection. The results can be rewarding on a multitude of levels. Eddie has embraced this art of hybridizing head on, and rose growers around the world are reaping the benefits of his labor. He covered this in great detail in his recent trip to Monroe. Some of the information he shared with the audience follows.

Rose hybridizing involves five basic steps including the pollination of the flower. Once this pollination is complete, weeks pass resulting in a swollen rose hip. This hip contains many seeds that can be harvested and planted just like you would plant any other type of seed. For those not familiar with a rose hip, it's the portion of the flower that swells after fertilization and contains and protects the seeds. Once the seeds are planted they will grow into a tiny rose bush or seedling. Just like human beings, if the parent or mother produces 30 seeds within the rose hip you'll get exactly 30 different seedlings or “children.” And as you parents know, each child has his or her very own personality; roses are no different. They may differ in form, color, fragrance and many other attributes that they can inherit from their parents. For instance, if one of the parents has an intense fragrance, Eddie says that the resulting offspring plant will likely have roughly 50% less fragrance than did the parent. One can then understand why many roses on the market are very beautiful, but simply lack that strong, old garden rose scent. This is unfortunate in many cases as you could end up with a beautiful specimen plant that produces extravagant flowers, but lack the fragrance that many consumers demand. Thus, it is a rare treat when a rose hybridizer can create a new rose that has both beauty and fragrance. Eddie has been successful at doing just that.

If you're like me, however, and are not much into the breeding of roses, you can still enjoy the fruits

of our famed rose hybridizer's talents by purchasing Eddie's and others' roses. One of the only nurseries around that carries his variety of exhibition, hybrid tea roses is located in Mississippi and is called K&M Nursery. Jim Mills is the owner and will, fortunately, ship anywhere in the country.

Some of Eddie's creations that are available to the general market include:

- Marilyn Wellan - Hybrid Tea (Red Blend; Fragrant)
- Mavrik - Hybrid Tea (Pink and White Spiral)
- Denali - Hybrid Tea (Light Crème)
- Cajun Sunrise - Hybrid Tea (Light Yellow with Pink Edging)
- Deidre Hall - Hybrid Tea (Extremely Fragrant; Yellow / Pink blend)
- Hot Princess - Hybrid Tea (Hot Pink)
- Pop Warner - Hybrid Tea (Light Pink)
- Desperado - Hybrid Tea (Red Blend)

Would you like to learn more about rose growing or rose hybridizing? If so, I recommend you consider joining the local chapter of the American Rose Society. There is an active and growing chapter located in Northeast Louisiana, and its members meet once per month. There are many other benefits of being a member including an annual subscription to the American Rose magazine. It's the perfect venue if you're interested in anything roses, and NOW is the time to get started. Now until February is the perfect time to plant roses. I actually prefer to plant them now rather than February as it gives them time to get established in their new homes before the cooler weather arrives. It's also the prime time to broadcast cool-season flowering seeds such as Bachelor Buttons, Poppies and Larkspur along with many other cool-season plant varieties. Simply sow them over roughed-up ground and water well. They'll make great rose companion plants.

For more details on these topics and more please e-mail me at growit@LearnToGarden.net, or to see the video of Eddie and his recent presentation visit www.LearnToGarden.net and click on the video section. Until then don't forget to start planning your spring garden as spring will be here before you know it.

From our family to yours... we wish you and your family a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!
