Plant of the Month

Knockout Rose

The praises of Knockout rose are being sung by many who have given it a try.

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During my twenty years of trying to tame and reclaim our wonderful ten acre parcel that was once part of a northern Leon County hunting plantation, I have purposely avoided the demanding regime of growing roses. Too demanding, time-intensive, and energy-consuming to fight the never ending battle against the dratted black spot, said I. With so many miles to go before I sleep, why waste time on the boringly repetitive, chemical laden tasks of trying to get the newer hybrid roses to thrive in our humidity?

But, still I was weak and succumbed every now and then to the beauty of a rose plant for sale. Forsooth, with nary a success (once my good care-taking behavior waned.) Until…(Note: It’s now time to hear the trumpets doing their ta-da thing.) **Rosa ‘Knockout’!!**

Called the most talked about roses in a century, rose growers from all across the country tout its absolute resistance to black spot as well as to other diseases. For three seasons it is covered in non-stop continuous blooms of 3 inch single cherry red flowers. It is also evergreen with its foliage turning burgundy-violet in fall, say the experts. Its orange-red hips also add color during the fall and winter. It is praised as the best rose for four season interest. This rose is great for hardiness zones 4-9.

‘Knockout’, a compact hybrid (about 3.5 feet high and wide) developed by Canadian rose breeder William Reeder, was an All-American Selection for 2000 and a 2000 AARS winner. It is maintenance free, exceptionally hardy (crown hardy to -20 degrees), and is somewhat shade tolerant, blooming well with a half-day of shade. It doesn’t need to be deadheaded in order to have subsequent blooms. It doesn’t even seem phased by humidity.

Can you believe all these things… about a rose?

What ‘Knockout” does prefer is sun, moist but well-drained soil, and some fertilizer. Period.

‘Knockout’ Rose makes a good addition to rose gardens, in a mass planting, or in mixed borders. I have had three growing in containers since spring, and all three have been continuously covered with flowers. They
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make quite a statement.

Never let it be said again that a rose is a rose is a rose, for we now have Rosa ‘Knockout.’

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