



Rose to the top

Carolside in the Borders is home to a range of magnificent flowers, but it is the collection of roses – ancient, new and rambling – that set Rose Foyle's garden apart from the rest

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'I got my love of roses from my grandmother - she adored them'

It is a sunny morning in summer and Rose Foyle is standing in the middle of the large lawn south of Carolside, the Georgian house she shares with her husband Tony, measuring out the possible outline for a new pergola. On hand is James Brotherton, the Earlston-based blacksmith who has created many of the romantic, rose-festooned arches, pergolas and gates in this Berwickshire garden. Meanwhile, Tony, Rose's enthusiastic supporter and 'committee of one', is hunting for the blue rope to mark the potential outline. Their son, the young artist William Foyle, who is currently painting in the walled garden, will later offer his suggestions.





The idea behind the pergola, Rose explains, is to link the orangery, tucked into the side of the Georgian house, to the walled garden and the woodland walk along the River Leader. 'The pergola must line up perfectly with the garden room, the gates into the walled garden and the woodland garden,' she explains.

At issue are questions of height and proportion. 'The pergola must be large enough for the house. Should it be circular or oval and are we going to have arches? The plan is to cover the structure with just one type of rambling rose, maybe pale-pink Paul's Himalayan Musk.'

Rose worries that the results might be too grand. Her vision is for a simple structure where

you could have tea. But because of the nature of the project, 'there will only be one chance to get it right'.

This set of circumstances perfectly illustrates the confidence, skill and vision – to say nothing of the sheer joy – that Rose has used to transform this space into one of Scotland's best loved gardens, with visitors returning year after year to soak up its beauty and charm.

For Rose, who grew up in Northern Ireland, 'in the north-east where there is a soft climate', gardening was a childhood passion and roses are a particular love. 'My grandmother adored roses, and I got my love of them from her,' she explains. 'I love all plants; they are my great

Above: A rustic trellis festooned with roses.

Far left: Archways lead to secret corners of the garden. **Left:** The gardens surround the family's gracious Georgian home.

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interest – as a child I would wander excitedly around each spring to see what had come up.'

Later, living in London, she grew roses, but she only got her first proper chance to garden when she and her family left the capital and moved north to Carolside 24 years ago. Keen to see how her own vision would evolve, Rose stopped visiting other gardens and instead drew on childhood memories of Irish gardens. 'When I think about it now, I am surprised how much I'd absorbed from those visits,' she says.

Work began in the two-acre walled garden, which, unusually, has two walled attachments or rooms. Here, the exterior walls were planted with a generous border, designed to create an impact from a distance, and now packed with





pink Felicia and Penelope roses and edged with a fringe of purple catmint, nepeta 'Six Hills Giant'. Like the catmint in the walled garden, this bed is alive with bees and butterflies all summer long. Entered through a metal gate, the walled garden is laid out in traditional cruciform style with a central path running through a wide double border, backed with rustic poles linked with roses. The impact is immediate: your eye is instantly transported up, over an alternating ribbon of catmint and yellow *Alchemilla mollis*, over the drifts of herbaceous plants and roses to the central rose-covered pergola.

Rose explains that after years of experimen-

ting she has found a successful formula. 'I like to plant in drifts of colour but instead of using the same plant I mix plants of a similar colour and different texture. It's like painting.' One example of this technique might be a naturalistic blend of blue delphiniums, *Campanula persicifolia* 'Cornish Mist', phlox 'Blue Boy' and purple thalictrum. Creamy filipendula and maroon *Cirsium rivulare* link the scheme and add continuity.

A horizontal path further divides the space, creating a series of rooms, once devoted to vegetables but increasingly used to accommodate Rose's collection of old, scented Gallica

Above: Among the roses climbing up the tall stone walls are rambling pink Princess Louise, deep pink Madame Caroline Testout and pink Souvenir de la Malmaison.

Far left: Pathways lead past scented blooms to inviting seating areas.





'I've had 24 years of joy doing this garden'

Top: Mr Tuft, the gardener, keeps the rambling roses in check. **Right:** Pale blooms stand out in contrast to the luscious pinks and reds of many of the rose varieties. **Left:** Roses fill the borders that surround the garden.

roses, varieties of which fill the perimeter border. Here, the well-spaced collection allows each plant to stand alone so nothing can detract from individual beauty; it is regularly tended by Mr Tuft, the gardener.

As she points out various favourites, Rose explains that most of her knowledge comes from 'having my nose in books for years', and trying different varieties, such as pink Gloire des Mousseux and crimson Louis Gimard: 'This one is terrible in the rain but glorious in the sun – you want to look at it several times a day.'

Climbing up the tall stone walls are violet-tinted Marie Viaud, rambling pink Princess Louise, deep pink Madame Caroline Testout, and Laure Davoust and another particular pink favourite, Souvenir de la Malmaison.

Turn right at the top of the garden, where a layout of box sets off the Victorian glasshouses with the potting sheds beyond, and you reach the first of the two additional rooms. The first is planted with herbs, and the second is a secret garden filled with Felicia roses, set off by nepeta. Beyond that, a series of yew and beech hedges enclose a small orchard planted with heritage varieties of apples, a winter garden, a fragrant spring garden, with azaleas, white foxgloves and





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hostas and autumn-themed areas with creamy hydrangea 'Annabelle' and varieties of sorbus.

Walking back across the lawn we pass the blue rope, now in the shape of an oval measuring 40ft by 22ft. 'Water has been suggested,' Rose says, 'but I just love roses and I want a more intimate approach to the walled garden. It takes me years to germinate an idea so nothing will happen at once. But I can't stop gardening. I've had 24 years of joy doing this garden.' 🌹

Above: Delphiniums, catmint and yellow *Alchemilla mollis* in the border. **Left:** Rose hips in full bloom.



FIELDFACTS

Carolside, Earlston,
Berwickshire TD4 6AL
Open on Wednesdays in July from
11am to 5pm. The entrance is
marked off the A68 north of Earlston.
Admission: £5 (concessions, £3)
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