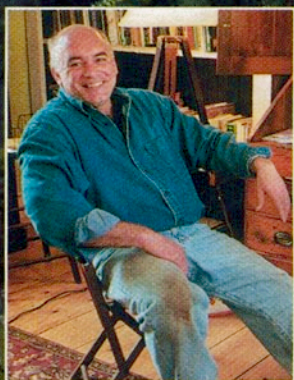


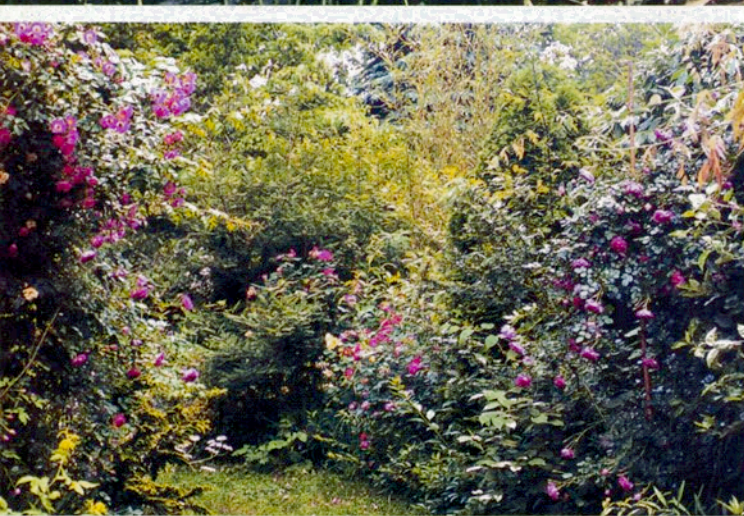
# Stephen Scanniello



An expert rosarian makes growing roses a snap

A branch of weeping larch droops over spring-flowering daffodils and tulips. It hints at the colors of the roses that will be blooming by summertime in Stephen Scanniello's garden.

LEFT: With dirt still clinging to the knees of his jeans, Scanniello takes a break.



by Mervyn Kaufman

"I'M NOT A TRAINED HORTICULTURIST," CONFESSES STEPHEN Scanniello. "I've learned from experience—and from my mistakes." The author of three books on roses, including Jackson & Perkins' *Rose Companions: Growing Annuals, Perennials, Bulbs, Shrubs and Vines with Roses* (Cool Springs Press, 2005), and a sought-after lecturer and landscape design consultant, Scanniello transformed the Brooklyn Botanic Garden's Cranford Rose Garden into a showcase of flourishing roses that attracts thousands of visitors each year.

## Q: Why do you love roses?

A: It's a combination of things; it's their beauty and fragrance, along with their brilliant colors, of course. But what really pulled me in, and made me a genuine rosarian, was learning their history—how they have survived over the centuries.



TOP LEFT: In his own garden, Scanniello has planted an assortment of rambling, ever-blooming roses including 'American Pillar' in combination with perennials.

BELOW LEFT: Blooming together every spring are fragrant yellow *Rosa primula* and wisteria, wonderful companions in Scanniello's garden.



BELOW: A view of a client's home shows perennial yellow yarrow growing among the roses: 'Parade' is on the left and 'Sombreuil' is on the right. The prominent pink rose in the center is a hybrid tea called 'Curly Pink'.

RIGHT: Scanniello designed the arrangement of shrub-type hybrid tea roses, ramblers and climbers along the front porch of a client's house. Clinging to the pillars are the purple rambler 'Veilchenblau', the white climber 'Sombreuil', pink 'Parade', and peach 'Compassion'.



## Q: What's the allure of roses for gardeners?

**A:** It's the hope of finding the perfect-looking rose. When people visit a nursery, they buy a rose with a label that has the image of a perfect bloom. Often they get discouraged when they discover they can't achieve that look, so I tell them, "You have to learn what will do best in your garden and how it should be grown." Whether they have a rooftop garden, large acreage or a postage stamp-size plot, there's a rose for every situation.

## Q: Why are some gardeners afraid to grow roses?

**A:** They may have had bad experiences. Many people grow roses in a traditional way: isolated in a bed of just roses and perhaps planted too close together. If one plant suddenly gets a black spot, the whole garden is soon blighted, and then you

have a mass of plants with naked stems. I group roses with other plants. I create gardens with roses, not rose gardens. My roses do get black spots and often have aphids, but there are always other plants nearby to assume the focus. I simply prune back the afflicted roses so they'll recover and bloom again.

## Q: What are good companion plants for roses?

**A:** You need to know the needs of both your roses and their companions. You shouldn't put a shade plant next to a rose bush, for example. Any shallow-rooted plant can be placed close to the base of a rose. If you want to enjoy your garden year-round, consider planting evergreen companions: boxwood or ilex. A garden of just roses can be really ugly in the wintertime when they are just leafless canes.





**Q: How can people be more successful with roses?**

**A:** Being aware of the roses' needs is important. Roses must have at least five hours of sunlight a day to be healthy. They also need soil that drains well. Water them thoroughly once a week unless there is rain. Mulching is another key to success. It reduces the soil's evaporation factor and keeps the roots cooler. Take care to never overfertilize. I use compost as a mulch in the winter and a top dressing in the spring. I believe healthy roses start with healthy soil.

**Q: Do you have any advice on pruning?**

**A:** Yes. Don't be afraid to do it! Roses love to be pruned. The biggest mistake you can make is not pruning them. Anyone gardening in the Northeast should prune around St. Patrick's Day. People living in the South and Southwest, including California, should target Valentine's Day. But if you live in a nonstop tropical climate, you can start pruning in January. Prune ever-blooming roses as hard as you like, whenever you wish. Once-blooming roses need the previous year's growth to do their best blooming, so don't prune them till after they've bloomed.

**Q: What are the best roses to grow for cutting?**

**A:** Hybrid teas are the ultimate cut rose. They're not the prettiest plants, but they have long stems and last longest when cut for arrangements indoors. In addition, there are a lot of climbing roses that produce beautiful long-stemmed flowers. One of my favorites, 'Compassion', is a really beautiful peachy pink rose.

**Q: How have growers and breeders made rose growing easier?**

**A:** Mainly, they're paying more attention to disease resistance, which has become a big issue. Until the 1970s there was a push toward developing the prettiest flower and little concern for how the plant itself would fare—because there were sprays for every affliction. During my 10 years as a curator at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, I saw a shift toward more environmentally friendly roses. The newest ones—and there are many, perhaps too many, coming out each year—are definitely more disease resistant. Today, you can grow roses successfully in your garden without spraying them.

**Q: When should gardeners buy and plant roses in their yards?**

**A:** Autumn is the best time. Temperatures are cool, but the soil is still comparatively warm. On the other hand, you'll find a parade of new roses in the spring when the nurseries put out their stock. I prefer buying and planting in the fall, but I do end up doing a lot of planting every spring. And if you go to a nursery in the middle of summer and fall in love with a rose growing in a pot, you can take it home and plant it. You can put potted plants in the ground at any time of the year, as long as the ground isn't frozen. \*