

Cheek's fragrant roses part of SAAC's 2011 Art in the Garden

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Fragrance plays as much of a role in the selection of a new rose variety as does color for Wanda and Paul Cheek. With about 105 varieties of roses in their garden, a rose is selected for its color impact, but visitors can also follow their nose for a “scent sensation” down this garden path.

“There is nothing like this side of the yard when the roses are in bloom,” Paul Cheek said.

Wanda Cheek said this is “a collection thing” for them these days, but they have not always been rose gardeners. It began as a friendly bet.

In passing by the yard of family friend, Charles Weatherly, the Cheeks would always admire his roses. Then, Wanda “threw down the gauntlet.” She said “I bet you can’t grow roses like Charlie.”

Paul had heard this one too many times when he found roses on sale for 75 percent off at a garden center in south Mississippi. He was out to prove a point.

In his pursuit of rose gardening, the Cheeks have come to delight in tending the roses and seeing what works in various locations.

“They are committed to keeping track of their roses, so name plates accompany each rose, and the collection is listed on a spreadsheet,” said Wanda Thorne, co-chair of the 2011 Art in the Garden Tour. “Fragrance is a prime consideration in rose choice. Perennials, annuals, and vegetables grow among the roses. An extra lot provides space for vegetables grown in raised beds.”

Thorne said the Cheek’s new garden efforts include a muscadine vineyard, a cutting flower garden, blueberry bushes, and an asparagus bed.

“Four large oak trees were lost in 2010, and the septic tank’s malfunction resulted in a landscape alteration,” Thorne said. “They strive to be green in their spraying, fertilizing, and watering practices.”

Suzy Turner, co-chair for the 2011 Art in the Garden event, loves the colorful roses.

“The Cheek’s garden is a rose lover’s paradise,” Turner said. “You will think you are in another country wandering around their lovely grounds.”

The Cheek’s garden will be one of seven local gardens open for touring Saturday as part of the 2011 Art in the Garden, sponsored by the Starkville Area Arts Council. On Saturday, local artists will create a work of art in one of the seven gardens. Community members who have tour tickets will not only have the opportunity to tour some of the most amazing gardens in Starkville, they will also be able to interact with the artists as they create.

Art in the Garden will be from 9 a.m. until 1 p.m. Saturday. Advance tickets available at SAAC office or East Mississippi Lumber Company. On Saturday morning, tickets will be available from 8 a.m. until noon at Starkville Community Theatre lobby only.

Turner said SAAC will use any profits from these tours for art related grants for children in all the schools in Oktibbeha county as well as for art related scholarships, both summer and college. SAAC also provides funding to the Starkville-Mississippi State University Symphony Association and the Starkville Community Theatre.

For more information about the 2011 Art in the Garden event, contact the SAAC at 324-3080.