

Rose Garden is one of MSU's more beautiful research projects

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Which rose varieties stand up to the moodiness of Mississippi weather?

If this spring has been any indication, the varieties currently on display at the Veteran's Memorial Garden at Mississippi State University are winners.

Dr. Pam Collins, director of the Veteran's Memorial Garden at MSU, said it is a research demonstration garden.

Frequent visitors to the garden will have the opportunity to view how particular rose varieties stand up to all types of weather conditions. This spring alone, the garden has seen large amounts of wind and rain, as well as hail damage. And even though it is a research project of sorts, organizers have made the space decorative enough for the public to enjoy. "Visitors can observe which roses perform well in the Mississippi climate and weather," Collins said. "If roses perform well in this garden, visitors can be assured they will thrive in their own landscapes."

The Veteran's Memorial Rose Garden was one of seven local gardens available for touring as part of the 2011 Art in the Garden tour, sponsored by the Starkville Area Arts Council this weekend. Members of the Master Gardeners program were available Saturday morning to answer questions and serve as tour guides through the garden. It is one of two gardens on the tour that is open to the public year-round.

"Most people love the peace and serenity they find there," Collins said. "I also love the sense of serenity it presents."

Collins loves all of the roses found in the garden, but is partial to the Lady Banks Rose.

"The bloom is spectacular," Collins said. "It is semi-evergreen and it does not suffer from black spot."

The design and construction of the Veteran's Memorial Rose Garden began in 2004.

Collins designed the arbors. MSU landscape architect Darryl Ray created the original master plan for the garden, including the gazebo. Bob Brzuszek designed the entrance garden.

According to the website, rose planting at the site began during spring 2006. By fall 2007, construction was complete, and more than 30 rose cultivars were established at the garden. The garden is located at the Highway 182 entrance to the R. Rodney Foil Plant Science Research Facility.

Charles Weatherly, of the Oktibbeha County Master Gardeners said the arched bridge, over the stream at the south entrance of the garden, was made at the North Mississippi Research and Extension Center in Verona then moved and installed at the present location.

The local Master Gardeners and Oktibbeha County Rose Society members were involved on planting day in the spring of 2005. Then both groups helped in winterizing the rose garden in November of that year.

Weatherly said the rose beds in the center of the garden have substantial concrete foundations below the red bricked beds with subterranean drainage provided for each bed four feet deep in the ground.

Weatherly said the beds are approximately 4 ft. wide and 4 ft. deep. Washed gravel fills the bottom 18 inches. There is other drainage at walking level. The beds are laid out in six separate sectors of a circle. Five beds in each sector or three beds total, in various lengths.

The Rose beds were filled with a special soil base and filled to the top for planting. Weatherly said the special MSU soil base was a modified version of that used by the Tyler, Texas Rose Garden Society. The group maintains about 32,000 roses.

The Tyler, Texas Rose Garden Soil Recipe: For 1 cubic yard quantity, a 'blend of materials for the soil media their roses are grown in consists of the following:

- 1/2 yd. of good weed free "top soil"— actually it is a good sandy loam.
- 1/2 yd. of Vital Earth's Rose mix, which should consist of equal parts aged pine bark, peat replacer, and sand with some time-release micros.
- 6 lbs. of 13-13-13 commercial fertilizer; 6 lbs. of pelletized Dolomite limestone; 4 lbs. of Alfalfa pellets (15 percent protein); 4 lbs. of Cottonseed meal (39 percent protein); Add 3 oz. of slow release like Osmokote to this if you do not use the Vital Earth Rose Mix.

Another element of the garden features 350 additional rose plantings behind the decorative garden. These modern shrubs are being bred for disease resistance to be used in the landscape.

Collins said she is a big believer in sustainable gardens, and the work conducted in the modern shrub rose area will eliminate black spot and will require no spraying in maintaining roses in the home landscape. MSU is in the second year of taking data for the modern shrub roses. The public is also allowed to view that area of the garden, but no pets. For more information about the Veteran's Memorial Garden at MSU, go to <http://www.rosegarden.msstate.edu/>.