

Activity: Plant Care Goal: Psychological/Emotional Populations: All

TH Activity Plan – Texas Old Garden Roses: A Sense of Place

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Photo by Antique Rose Emporium



ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: Participants will expand their knowledge of Texas roses, its industry, history & contribution to a sense of place in addition to propagating an old garden rose.

THERAPEUTIC GOALS:

Cognitive/Intellectual: Expand horticultural & historical knowledge

Physical: Practice fine motor & dexterity hand skills

Psychological/Emotional: Deepen personal understanding of self – Identity & sense of place

Sensory: Practice safe handling of roses with thorns

Social: Engage with others interested in learning about roses, Texas & gardening

Materials

Old Garden Rose plants sufficient for cuttings

Rooting hormone, pruners, 4” pots, perlite, disinfectant, water, care directions

Gloves, wipes

Questionnaire, pens

STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS:

1. **Pre-Session Preparation:** Gather materials for propagating antique roses, one per participant.
2. Facilitator begins session by showing off some antique roses that flourish in Texas. Sharing some horticultural information on antique (garden or old) roses, transitioning into short history of roses, rose production in Texas (see below), distinctive traits are revealed.
3. Participants gather propagation materials & follow sequential steps for hardwood rose cuttings with bottom heat.
4. Take 3-6” cuttings from this season’s growth (typically late summer or fall in colder climates, Jan in CA; semi hardwood cuttings made in the summer and fall are also successful in northern CA), cutting through a bud (just below a bud) at the base of the cutting (and just above the top bud. Each cutting should have 5 to 6 healthy buds). Remove all but the last (top) 2 set(s) of leaves. Calling each leaflet a “set” might help participants understand to cut the whole leaf off rather than just a part of it, but a more informative approach would be to tell them that it is a compound leaf. The bud at its base will create new the growth. Buds are the “magic spots”.
5. Dip the base of the cutting into water, then rooting hormone powder, placing cuttings gently into a 4” pot with only perlite.
6. Place pots directly on a heating mat, not to exceed 70°. [Care instructions recommended.](#)
7. Discussion of Texas antique roses, relating rose traits to themselves, & a sense of place allows participants to explore personal identity. The rose becomes the metaphor for self-reflection.

APPLICATIONS FOR POPULATIONS: Can plants create a sense of place? This workshop themed Texas Old Garden Roses seeks to explore this notion. Presented to wellness populations (or others), it uses therapeutic goals, stated or not stated explicitly, and plant characteristics to inform, stimulate, and guide participants in expanding self-awareness, intellectual knowledge, social awareness and physical safety protocols (handling thorny roses).

The primary focus will be on relating Texas old garden roses to personal traits. The facilitator can set the tone, presenting this type of self-discovery as light-hearted, or for some populations, a focus on psychological challenges like improving mood, being more self-aware, or practicing responsible behavior.

The starting point for the TH (or recreational or educational) session is presenting a short history of Texas culture, its history related to roses, rose production and in particular antique or old garden roses. Some of the interesting and dynamic points: defining “old”, roses in this case (or humans), generally considered introduced prior to 1867 ([Parson, n.d.](#)). Characteristics of old roses – more resistant to disease, ability to survive and adapt to different sites and conditions, more muted colors, forms and foliage compared to hybridized roses (Parsons, n.d.). Old roses grown in Texas have been vegetatively propagated, linking its heritage to historical figures and times including the San Antonia rose, considered to be the oldest ever blooming roses in that city.

The [rose growing industry in Texas](#) began in the late 1800s, with large scale commercial production occurring in the early 1900s. Tyler Texas was nicknamed the Rose Capital of the World, growing more than 300 varieties and 20 million rose plants in the 1950s. Texas rose production declined in the 1990s due to competition and unpredictable weather though the rose processing industry flourished with bare-root plant production. This coincided with interest in antique roses, and the evolution of this facet as a cottage industry. Today, [rose rustling](#), in Texas (and elsewhere) is occurring, where taking cuttings for propagation seeks to preserve old roses. Participants in the TH session will propagate old garden roses after completing a questionnaire.

SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS: Facilitators are responsible for knowing poisonous and toxic plants and plant parts. Touching plants is not recommended for specimens that are toxic, thorny or sappy.

NOTES OR OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

Can You Relate to Texas Old Garden Roses?	
Old Garden Rose Characteristics	Your Characteristics
Do you currently live or have ever lived in Texas?	
Are you old (introduced prior to 1867) or feel old?	
Are you a survivor?	
Can you adapt to situations like old garden roses did?	
Are you prickly?	
Are you a cultural artifact or have links to historical figures?	
Do you have a great name?	
Have you ever rustled roses or something else?	
Do old garden roses provide a sense of place?	

Antique roses that grow well in Texas:

[Mutabilis](#) – multi-colored single petal blooms that darken with age on a bush form

[Souvenir De La Malmaison](#) – compact bush shape with large, flat quartered pale pink fragrant blossoms

[Seven Sisters](#) – dating from France in 1817, transported to Texas through rugged conditions; clusters of flowers in carmine, purple, mauve, pink and cream as the flowers fade

[Old Bush](#) – from 1752 for this semi-double hybrid of *R. chinensis* grows to 5 ft., the most common of old roses

REFERENCES/ RESOURCES:

Martin, C. (1999). *100 old roses for the American garden*. Smith & Hawkins. (beautiful photos-field guide)

Martin, O. (2008). [Rose primer: An organic approach to rose selection and care](#) [downloadable]. Agroecology.ucsc.edu.

Toogood, A. (2021). [Plant propagation](#). [downloadable online]. Archive.org.

Welch, B. (n.d.). [Old roses](#). *Aggie Horticulture.tamu.edu*.

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TH Activity Plan form developed by Lesley Fleming, Susan Morgan and Kathy Brechner (2012), revised in 2024.