



Banks rose

Banks rose, or Lady Banks' rose (*Rosa banksiae*), is one of those plants that can make even a jaded urban dweller brighten up. Who could not enjoy a plant that bursts into bloom, covering an entire thornless shrub with glorious double flowers? All of the flowers appear at once, which makes for a spectacular display. While they are usually grown as shrubs, with some care they can be trained to a trellis. Although they are relatively numerous in Southern Nevada landscapes, they are unique as roses go. Most of us are familiar with the cream colored variety, although they can also be yellow or white. For a while there was talk about a red cultivar, but apparently that is not a true Banks rose. More likely, that shrub is one that has a repeat blooming habit. Pretty, without any doubt, but this would not be the Banks rose.



Several characteristics make Lady Banks such a favorite. For one thing, the flowers are lovely, and they all appear at about the same time. In fact, it is one of the earliest flowering shrubs in many local gardens. Since it has a sprawling habit, it can cover most of a wall (or a yard) in blossoms if given the chance. Another attractive feature is that it is almost completely free of thorns ("prickles" is the technical term), which are standard defenses for most roses. Some of the white varieties do have thorns on the larger branches, however. It tolerates our wild weather conditions! Summer heat does not kill, nor does the winter generally cause much harm. When given some fertilizer after the blooming period, it will continue to grow merrily.

Finally, it keeps its leaves year-round in this climate, so it does not leave dead-looking branches through winter, when many landscapes are unattractively barren.



The plant itself does not require pruning, but it will elbow its way to become a 20 foot wide shrub if permitted. Few people have unlimited land to dedicate to a single rose bush, so while it may not need to be pruned back, most gardeners need to keep it in check.

Like many, perhaps most, early flowering landscape plants, Banks' produce their blooms on what is called "old wood". This is wood that grew last year, or even the previous year, which makes sense, since there has not been enough time to develop new woody tissue before the flowering period.

Since they do bloom on old wood, they cannot be severely pruned during the winter, the time when most other landscape plants receive their grooming. More than likely, the wood that would

be removed in January is the very wood that would bear the flowers! Badly timed pruning is a sure way to diminish the spring floral display.

The way to maintain them is to do all serious pruning right after the flowers have passed. This holds true for the other early spring flowering plants as well. Give the shrub enough time to grow flowering wood, and it will burst into bloom in the spring.

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