

Master Gardener Article

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A ROSE BY ANY OTHER NAME

By Dottie Holman

When moving out here to Lake Havasu in April of 1997 the temperatures were in the triple digits. And not knowing any better we planted our landscaping in July. One of the plants that I chose to go up a western exposure wall was a beautiful vine that I heard about. This vine I was told flourishes in Lake Havasu, and loves heat...lots of heat. This vine has no thorns and will not physically attach itself to you or your home. It is evergreen all year long and blooms around March. This vine or bush is called Lady Banks Rose (*rosa banksiae*).

Lady Banks Rose is a vigorous grower. It can grow to twenty feet or more. The famous rose in Tombstone, Arizona, that is reported to be the largest rosebush in the world, is *rosa banksias*.

Aphid resistant and almost immune to disease makes this a popular climbing rose bush. It is tolerant of our soil (but prefers amendments), loves heat (and I mean 120 degree heat) and stays evergreen for 12 months of the year and will drop some of its leaves in the winter when we get a cold front. This rose bush, just like all others, does require moderate water. Fertilizing is the same as regular rose bushes.

The Lady Banks can be used in various ways. As a groundcover, it is best used in large scaled areas where pruning and shearing is not necessary. It will give you a wild informal look unless you keep it pruned and sheared. As a vine, it needs to be trained on an arbor, trellis or fence. It needs something to wind itself through or around since the branches are long and slender and need guidance.

The picture in this article is of the Lady Banks at my home. Clear fishing line was rapped around the outside porch pillars to train the Lady Banks up into a beautiful wall vine that now travels a distance of 30 feet. Eyehooks support the wire that the vines weave around over the arches.

The make up of the Lady Banks Rose is that the stems have almost no thorns. The leaves are a glossy green and have three to five leaflets to 2 ½ inches long. The flowers are large clusters of small, yellow or white flowers that look like popcorn. One cluster stem holds a multitude of individual stems. The only disadvantage is that this rose bush blooms only in the spring and has little fragrance. However this is a plus, since bees do not seem to bother with this rose bush so it can be used to cover an arbor seating area.

There are two forms of Lady Banks that are sold. “Lutea” which is scentless, double yellow flowers; and “Alba Plena” or “White Banksia” with violet-scented, double white flower. “Fortuniana” is sometimes sold as a double white banksia; it differs in that it has thorny canes, larger leaves and larger flowers that come individually rather than in clusters. The flowers look like small gardenias.

The Lady Banks rose bush/vine is an incredible plant and is well worth having in your garden and will not disappoint you. If you have the space and place, this rose bush is a keeper.

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