

David Austin rose experts Michael Marriott (*left*) and Richard Calkin (*right*) inspect the blooms at the company's headquarters.

A photograph of two men, Michael Marriott and Richard Calkin, standing in a vast field of blooming roses. Michael Marriott, on the left, is wearing a light blue and white striped short-sleeved shirt and khaki trousers. He is looking down at a dark red rose he is holding. Richard Calkin, on the right, is wearing a grey blazer over a blue shirt. He is holding a pink rose to his nose and inhaling its fragrance. The field is filled with various shades of pink and red roses, stretching into the distance under a bright sky.

# *The secret* OF SCENT

Now is the perfect time to order bareroot roses, so follow our guide to the most deliciously fragrant varieties and look forward to a heady summer in your garden next year

PHOTOGRAPHS MICHELLE GARRETT | WORDS JACKY HOBBS

Perfume is key to the desirability of a rose. No other species has such a wide perfume range, nor the chemical complexity - often more than 150 different oils combine to create the complex notes that make up a specific cultivar's unique and individual fragrance. David Austin's perfumed 'English Roses' are the secret to his company's worldwide success. In creating them, he has produced

a procession of intoxicating rose perfumes, reviving lost scents and creating new ones. He and his team expertly breed the finest blooms, crossing ancient with modern cultivars, to create an abundance of roses to fill our gardens with heady aromas.

Eager to know more about these scented beauties so adored by gardeners, we asked the David Austin team to tell us more about roses and the principle fragrance categories that define them. ►





THE FANCIFUL NATURE OF FRAGRANCE

The appreciation of fragrance is deeply personal, difficult to define and inconsistent; it changes by flower, hour, weather, soil, season and, of course, an individual's nose. David Austin Roses scent expert, or 'nose', Robert Calkin (left) and head rosarian Michael Marriott guide us through the sea of perfume at the nursery's garden, explaining the best way to smell and identify a rose's scent. 'Linger, don't judge on a single waft of perfume,' says Robert. 'Inhale, draw in deeply, let the fragrance warm up, like a wine, and try to 'taste' it.'

He suggests snipping a favourite bloom and taking it on a car journey, 'to fully appreciate all its qualities in the closed, warm enclave of your vehicle.' It is a technique that Robert uses himself to try and pinpoint particularly complicated rose perfumes. 'Fragrance has been likened to wine, with many different notes, unfathomable combinations and infinite outcomes,' explains Robert. 'However, there are fundamentally five recognised rose fragrance categories.' They are Old Rose, Tea Rose, Fruit, Myrrh and Musk.

*'Fragrance has been likened to wine, with many different notes, unfathomable combinations and infinite outcomes'*



CROSS BREEDING

Parent plants are grown in greenhouses. In early April, at the bud stage, petals are stripped off (top left) and the stamens are harvested, leaving just the stigma. Pollen is taken from the stamen (top right) and applied by paint brush to the stigma of another variety (below left & right). Seeds are extracted in October and kept just above freezing for three months, then sown. Flowers appear in early April. An initial selection is made on flower alone. These are budded onto rootstock out in the field. Over the next eight years, the number of selections is reduced, until the final four or five varieties are chosen for introduction at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show.



1. OLD ROSE

The most traditional and distinctive of rose fragrances, distilled and captured over the centuries to soothe, anoint and perfume. Old Rose is exemplified in *R. Gertrude Jekyll*. 'It's the quintessential Old Rose fragrance,' says Robert. 'It's my favourite; I keep it in pots and bring them into the house for breathtakingly fragrant summer suppers.' The velvety crimson petals of *R. Munstead Wood* (above) secrete a more complicated perfume, but with 'additional notes that are warm and fruity with hints of blackberry, blueberry as well as damson,' explains Robert. Other varieties including *Mary Rose*, *Falstaff*, *Harlow Carr* and *The Countryman* carry Old Rose fragrance too.



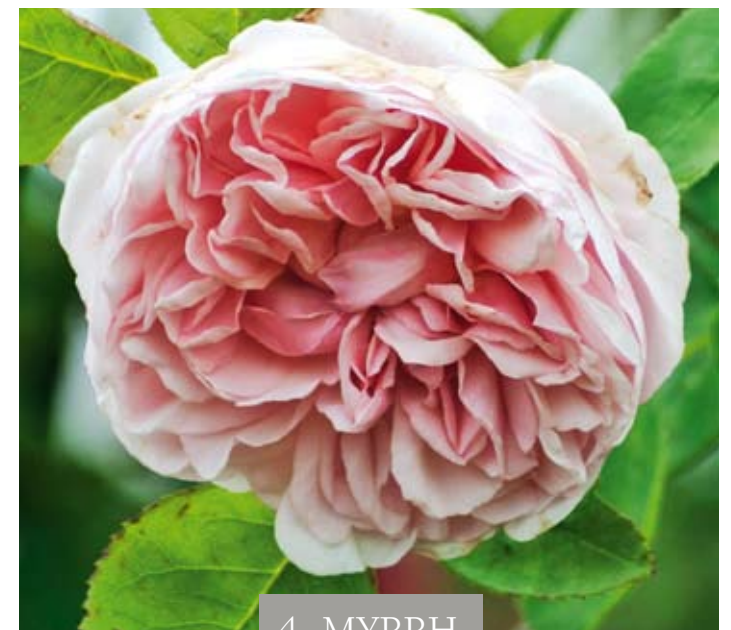
2. TEA ROSE

Roses with this scent have an unmistakable Chinese tea perfume, exactly as if you had just opened a fresh chest of the tea. Flowers tend to be yellow or apricot in colour, such as *Port Sunlight*, although *R. Princess Alexandra of Kent* (above) is a deep powder pink. According to Robert, this particular variety has 'an initial fresh tea fragrance, which changes completely to lemon with age, eventually taking on additional hints of blackcurrants'. This variety is a good example of how smelling your roses at different stages of development and times of day may reveal hidden nuances. Other Tea Roses include *Graham Thomas*, *Pegasus* and *Molineux*.



3. FRUIT

The heady scent of this collection of roses most commonly calls to mind hints of strawberry, apple, apricot, peach and raspberry, which are all also members of the same botanical genus as the rose, *Rosaceae*. However, there are always exceptions to the rule, and fragrances also include almond blossom, lemon and pineapple. *R. Lady Emma Hamilton*, according to Michael, 'often smells of lychees, although sometimes its pure grapefruit'. *R. Golden Celebration* starts as lemon tea and develops into 'a wonderful combination of sauterne wine and strawberry,' says Robert. *R. A Shropshire Lad* (above) and *R. Hyde Hall* also combine fruit with tea.



4. MYRRH

This fragrance naturally occurs in the oldest rambling Ayrshire roses. *R. 'Splendens'*, for example, is actually referred to as the myrrh-scented rose. It's a really potent perfume, exemplified in the myrrh-dabbed pink blooms of the vigorous and disease-resistant climbing *R. Saint Swithun* (above). 'Myrrh is reminiscent of sweet anise,' explains Robert. 'A bit like Marmite, you either love it or hate it.' In 1961, David Austin managed to successfully breed a myrrh-scented climbing variety with his first ever English Rose, *R. 'Constance Spry'*. *R. Spirit of Freedom* is more subtly fragranced, with just a hint of myrrh. ▶





## FURTHER INFORMATION

- **Visit the show garden** (left), plant sales, tea rooms and gift shop at David Austin Roses, Albrighton, Wolverhampton WV7 3HB. Tel: +44 (0)1902 376300.
- **Order bareroot roses** (delivered from November onwards) by visiting the website below.
- **You can also order bouquets** of heavenly scented cut roses, specially bred for this purpose by David Austin. For more information, see [www.davidaustinroses.com](http://www.davidaustinroses.com)

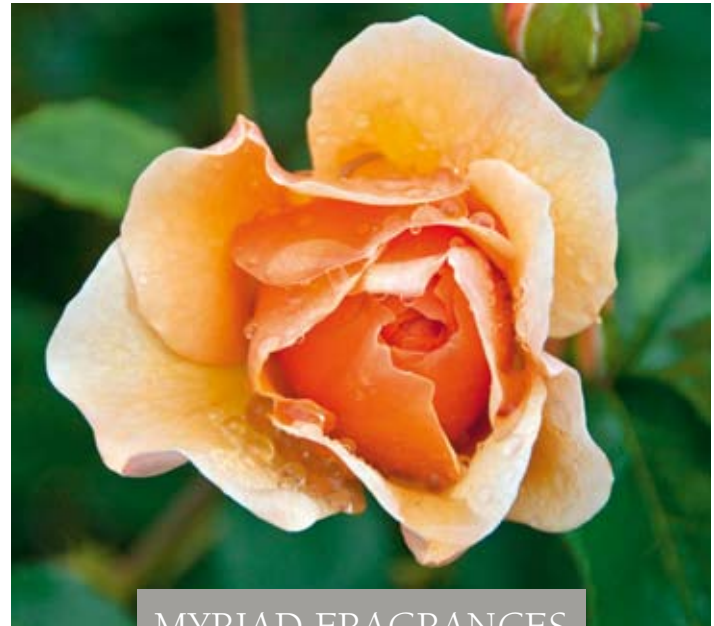
*'Musk is uniquely produced by the stamen, not the petals'*



### 5. MUSK

Musk, a fragrance derived from Himalayan musk deer, is coveted in the perfume industry and replicated in roses, where it is uniquely produced by the stamen, not the petals. 'It is perhaps the most omnipresent of all rose scents, perfuming the air on warm still mornings,' explains Robert. It is rarely found alone. *R. Malvern Hills* is one of the purest musk-scented roses, while Robert describes

*R. Skylark* (above) as having 'a light but pleasing fragrance: musk and tea with clove and a hint of apple pie'. *R. Wild Edric* has a light, musk-rose perfume with a hint of myrrh and *R. The Generous Gardener* has a strong fragrance with a blend of aspects of Old Rose, Musk and Myrrh.



### MYRIAD FRAGRANCES

Inevitably, there are myriad unique fragrances that fail to comply with any of the previous descriptions. According to Robert, *R. Heather Austin* mimics lilac flowers, while the highly scented old varieties of *R. 'Quatre Saisons'*, *R. 'Sunshine'*, and *R. rubus* (with its bramble-like leaves and particularly strong fragrance) are all unfathomable. 'That goes for *R. Buttercup* (above) too - a superb garden shrub with a wonderful scent,' he says. For Michael and Robert, these varieties typify the appeal of a scented rose. 'Whatever their perfume, they are most definitely interesting, and render us weak at the knees in our passionate love for fragranced roses.' ♦