

Bell County Master Gardeners'  
Tip of the Week  
By Candy Mullen  
"Valentine's Day Flowers"

Many of us are thinking of romance and flowers for the upcoming Valentine's Day. As gardeners, we can celebrate the holiday by giving a gift certificate, digging a new special flowerbed, or presenting our loved one with some carefully chosen flowers.

The verse *Roses are red* echoes has conventions traceable as far back as Edmund Spenser's epic *The Faerie Queene* (1590):

*She bath'd with roses red, and violets blew,  
And all the sweetest flowres, that in the forrest grew.*

The language of flowers, sometimes called floriography, was a Victorian-era means of communication in which various flowers and floral arrangements were used to send coded messages, allowing individuals to express feelings which otherwise could not be spoken.

Most of us today still give flowers, but have forgotten or are unaware of the 'language of flowers.' During the Victorian times when standards restricted open communication, various flowers and their combinations were used to convey feelings and messages both positive and negative. This language was most commonly communicated through Tussie-Mussies, an art which has a following today.

Red roses still imply passionate, romantic love, and pink roses a lesser affection; white roses suggest virtue and chastity, and yellow roses still stand for friendship or devotion. There are also geographic variances. For example, in Texas yellow roses represent true and undying love.

As gardeners, we are always on the lookout for hardy plants, especially here in Central Texas. One of the better roses to investigate is the Texas Super Stars' *Knock Out* of various colors. They have super star tags, which mean they are heat and cold tolerant, drought resistant and require little maintenance in the garden once established. You might also consider the so-called "antique" or "old fashioned" roses for their fragrance and beauty, as opposed to the modern ones you buy in the store. They are bred for looks and appearance, not scent.

There are many flowers and herbs that have a meaning that are just waiting to be chosen, given, or planted for that special someone in your life. Although roses are traditional, don't be afraid to give some other romantic flower for the occasion!

Have any questions about gardening in Central Texas? Contact [ask.bcmga@gmail.com](mailto:ask.bcmga@gmail.com)

Plan on attending the Bell County Master Gardeners' spring plant sale on Sat. March 24, 8:00 AM to 1PM.