



# International Rose Test Garden Self Guided Tour CITY OF PORTLAND PARKS AND RECREATION



**International Rose Test Garden at Washington Park  
Self Guided Tour  
May 14, 2006**

**Directions:** *Note directions between stops are shown in italics.*

*The tour will start at the handicap ramp which is to the right as you leave the Rose Garden Shop, just beyond the blue telescopes, in front of the restrooms.*

**Introduction**

Welcome to the International Test Rose Garden at Washington Park. This is the largest rose garden in Portland and has always been maintained and operated by the Portland Parks Bureau. A strong contingent of volunteers also supplements paid staff with their time and energy. Admission is free, though we encourage visitor donations at several boxes in the garden. As you walk through the garden, you will see that Portland, the “Rose City”, is just about perfect for growing roses, due to the mild winters and long growing season.

- By 1908 the tradition of planting roses on Washington’s Birthday was pretty much established to demonstrate Portland’s mild climate. Where else can you plant roses in the middle of winter?
- There are about a half a million visitors a year.
- 4.5 acres
- 6,847 roses, blooming late May through September
- 557 varieties.
- Thanksgiving pruning is wrist high and takes about a day, with a staff of 15. February pruning is 18”-24” and takes 4-5 days, for a crew of about 15.
- Continuous deadheading by volunteers keeps the roses blooming all summer and into the fall.

**Maintenance**

- The first spraying for black spot is when new growth is about 3”. Then about every 2 weeks after.
- We fertilize 3 times a year. If micronutrients are lacking, we use Portland Rose Society Fertilizer 15-10-10. Otherwise, a good nitrogen fertilizer is utilized.

**Rose Replacement**

The majority of the roses in the garden are commercially available. About 10-20 varieties are replaced each year with some of the best new roses released on the market each year. Most of the roses removed are given to local rose societies for pruning demonstrations.

**Stop No. 1: Rose of Antiquity** *Go to the handicap ramp. Before going down the ramp, go to the large shrub rose on your right a few feet away labeled Rose canina.*

- *Rosa canina*, the dog rose or common brier, is a European species. The plant you see here was grown from a cutting of a 1000 year old plant located next to a Cathedral in Germany. Its age is recorded in cathedral documents.

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**Stop No. 2: Rose City** *Proceed down the handicap ramp and enter the rose garden on your left. Stop at the first lamppost on the left just as you enter the rose garden. Look for the marker 'Mdme. Caroline Testout' in the bed that contains the Royal Rosarian Sign.*

- In 1901, a local lawyer named Frederick V. Holman, whose hobby was history, wrote an article for the newspaper entitled "Make Portland the Rose City". A quote from the article says "For obvious reasons we cannot compete with San Francisco as the 'foggy' or 'wicked' city, with Tacoma as the 'sleepy' or 'Sunday' city, or with Seattle as the 'raw' or 'hurrah city, but we can if we will give to Portland the name of the 'Rose City' (Frank L. Beach is also credited with coining the phrase "Portland City of Roses".
- For the 1905 Lewis and Clark Expo, Holman suggested making the whole city attractive for the event by having citizens plant roses. They planted 22 miles of roses along the curbside along the parade route. 'Madame Caroline Testout' was the only rose available in such quantities. It is estimated that 50,000 roses were planted. By 1917 more than 200 miles of parking strips were planted with the 'Madame Caroline Testout' Rose.

**Royal Rosarian Garden** *Follow the brick path around the garden.*

Established in 1912, the Royal Rosarian founders modeled their mythical Realm of Rosaria after the government of England's King Henry VII, whose rise to the throne ended the War of the Roses. Members are "knighted" into the organization under their chosen variety of rose, which is then their "namesake" rose.

- Royal Rosarians are ambassadors of good will for the city. Everywhere they go, they promote the city by planting a rose.
- They participate in many festivals through out the northwest and plant a rose at each.
- In 1917 the Royal Rosarian garden was developed along with the International Test Garden.
- The goal is to plant a rose in the garden for each prime minister.
- Additional information: [www.royalrosarian.org](http://www.royalrosarian.org)

**Stop #3: Beach Fountain** *After going down the steps stop at the fountain.*

- Set in a sunken section on the upper level of the garden, the Beach Memorial Fountain was dedicated in June 1975. The stainless steel sculpture, designed and built by Portland artist Lee Kelly, was a gift from the family of Frank E. Beach (1853-1934), the man who is said to have christened Portland the 'City of Roses.'

**Stop # 4: Kiosk** *Continue north, up 3 steps, and look to your left for the kiosk that contains information about the garden.*

**Stop #5: Testing Roses (All-American Rose Selections AARS)** *from the kiosk, head east on the path (towards downtown). Go down the steps (notice the roses planted on the slope. These are all floribunda roses.) Stop on this level.*

The beds next to the walk are AARS winners. The roses being tested are in the beds behind the winners and are marked with numbers instead of names.

- In 1938, the AARS chose Portland for trials for domestic and foreign varieties. It all started here. This was the very first test garden.
- The AARS is a non-profit organization made up of leading rose growers.
- At this garden the roses are scored by 9 judges.
- During the evaluation period, roses are graded by a prescribed numerical scoring system on vigor, growth habit, disease resistance, foliage, flower production, bud and flower form, opening and finishing color, fragrance, stem and overall value. This complex scoring system has been developed to answer consumer demand for beautiful, easy-to-grow roses.
- There is a total possible score of 150 points.
- These roses do not receive any special care, but receive the care normally provided by an average - not necessarily expert - home gardener.
- This is one of 24 rose test garden sites.
- Also, this is one of 6 sites for the American Rose Society miniature test program. This program is called “The Award of Excellence” or AOE.
- When testing is completed the roses are destroyed. Climbing roses are tested for 3 years, all others are tested for 2 years. Out of 50 or so rose entries, a maximum of 4 will make the final cut and be selected AARS winners.
- The winners are on each side of the walk.
- Code—1=miniature, 2=tea, 3=grandiflora, 4=floribunda, 5=landscape, 6=climber

See [www.rose.org](http://www.rose.org)

**Stop #6: Rose Queen—Queen’s Walk** *Continue on the walk and down the next flight of stairs (more floribunda roses on the banks) and continue forward to the brick walk.*

The Rose Festival Queen’s plaque is located in the center of the brick area.

- In 1907 was the first Rose Festival. It is the second largest natural plant material parade.
- The Queen’s Walk was established in 1953 with the first plaque placed in 1953.
- The chosen queen will participate in installing her own plaque.
- The queen is selected from 1 of 14 high schools in the area.
- She is elected on civic involvement and school activities.
- At one time, the Portland residents would vote on the Rose Queen and pay 1 cent to vote.

**Stop #7: Portland's Best Rose** *Walk south (That would be right as you are facing down the hill) on the Queens Walk (note the plaques). On your right look for the roses that have a name and a year.*

These are Portland's Best Rose. The roses are marked with their name and year selected as Portland's Best Rose.

- This event is held during Rose Festival.
- 150 people from the community judge the roses, which are picked by a committee.
- 35-40 roses are selected.
- The rose bed is marked with a flag and the name is covered to keep the name a secret.
- All rose "contestants" have been in the garden 5 years or less.
- It is the best rose on that day that wins the competition.
- The categories include best of all, most fragrant, best grandiflora, best floribunda, best shrub, and best hybrid tea.

**Stop #8: Shakespeare Garden** *Continue south on the Queens walk. This will lead you into the Shakespeare Garden.*

This garden is a calming place to rest your eyes from all the bright colors in the rose garden. This is a very popular place for weddings.

- In 1946, the Shakespearian Garden was dedicated. It was donated by the LaBarre Shakespeare Club as a place to give the 'eye a place to rest' from all the color of the rose garden.
- It was originally planted with plants that were mentioned in Shakespeare's plays
- Plants changed because of the increased shade from the large oak tree.
- Roses, all of which are named after Shakespearean characters, are the only tie-ins to the original Shakespeare Garden concept.
- White poppy, a native of the California foot hills, is located at the NE entrance (as you enter the garden) on the right.
- Mt Fuji cherry is on the left as you leave from the NW entrance.

**Stop #9: Gold Medal Garden** *Walk to the front of the Shakespeare Garden and exit to your right (north). You should be back in the Rose Garden. Turn left (west) and go up two sets of stairs. On the level between the second set of stairs and before you go up the third set of stairs turn left (south) and you will enter the Gold Medal Garden.*

- At one time, this was the compost area for the zoo.
- The Portland Rose Society was established in 1888.
- The garden was design in 1961. The Portland Rose Society donated the gazebo in 1991.
- 1919 was the first Gold Medal award given by the Portland Rose Society.
- In 1943, the Grand Duchess Charlotte of Luxembourg came to Portland to plant her namesake rose in the garden.
- The roses are scored for 3-5 years by a committee of 6 people from the Portland Rose Society and Portland Parks, using the same criteria as the test roses. Roses chosen for

consideration for planting in the Gold Medal garden are those that are doing the best in other parts of the rose garden.

- This garden is the only place in this country that has a Gold Medal program. It is recognized internationally.

**Stop # 10: Rose Breeding in Europe** *Go to the Peace Rose Bed in the Gold Medal Garden. This bed is located east (the other side of the garden from the gazebo) of the fountain in the Gold Medal Garden and overlooking the Shakespeare Garden.*

The ‘Peace’ rose. A rose with a rich history.

On June 15, 1935 Francis Meilland cross-pollinated two roses from which were produced the following year a weak seedling of dubious qualities. But a few eyes of that seedling were budded in 1936, and by fall one of the plants had developed into an especially fine specimen with lush green, glossy foliage. It had magnificent blooms of the most delicate ivory-yellow brushed with pink at the edges. It had no name but was simply called 3-35-40.

In June 1939, rose growers from 7 nations visited Meilland’s nursery and admired seedling 3-35-40. Budding stock was made available. In September 1939, Hitler invaded Poland and WW II started.

By November, the Nazis were closing in on southern France. The American consul, who loved roses, told Meilland that that he was leaving the country and that he could take some budwood to America if he received it within two hours. Meilland quickly parceled up a package containing budwood from 3-35-40. The budwood was on the last plane out of France.

Prior to this, Meilland entered into a contract with a rose grower in the United States. Jackson & Perkins had first crack at introducing ‘Peace’ in the United States, but had turned it down because Meilland was demanding a 33 percent royalty instead of the usual 15 percent—a decision J&P later regretted.

Despite the war, in 1942 Meilland introduced this rose in France by the name ‘Mme A. Meilland’ (in memory of his mother, Claudia). He also received word that the rose was being sold as ‘Gloria Dei’ (Glory to God) in Germany and as ‘Gioia’ (Joy) in Italy.

During the German occupation, the Meilland family had to remove their roses in order to grow crops for food.

In 1944, a month after France was liberated, Meilland received word that the rose was being grown in test gardens all over the United States and the American Rose Society found the rose to be exceptional.

The Conard-Pyle Company introduced this rose in America under the appropriate name of ‘Peace’ on April 29, 1945, coincidentally the same day Berlin fell to the Allies and the war was pronounced over. The ceremony took place at the first annual rose show of the

Pacific Rose Society at Pasadena, Ca. Two white doves were released into the heavens in honor of the new rose symbolizing peace.

That June, when the 50 members of the United Nations met for the first time at the United Nations Building in San Francisco, each found a blossom of the rose in their room.

‘Peace’ was give the All-American Award on the day Japan surrendered, and the rose received a gold medal from the American Rose Society on the day Japan signed its peace treaty.

It is estimated that in the next nine years, more than 30 million ‘Peace’ roses were planted world wide. The money from the sales allowed Meilland to rebuild his stock of roses and quickly return to business. Today, the Meillands are still creating roses.

Weeks Roses grow about 40,000 ‘Peace’ roses a year and it is the number-two seller, exceeded only by Mr. Lincoln.

J&P grows between 60,000 and 70,000 ‘Peace’ roses per year.

It is the only rose that was introduced in the 40’s and is still popular today.

As the famous hybridizer, Sam McGredy, once said, “For the record, ‘Peace’ is the greatest rose of my time. It’s as nearly perfect as a rose can be.

One thing unique about the ‘Peace’ rose is that it “sports” very easily (a branch will produce a different rose). ‘Chicago Peace’ (located (north) near the Peace rose bed), as ‘Lucky Piece’ (is Lucky Piece in garden if not then add “both” in parentheses after Flaming Peace) and ‘Flaming Peace’ (not in the garden) are sports of the ‘Peace’ rose.

*Exit the Gold Medal garden through the arch and walk uphill to where you started. Or, better yet, spend the day wandering around the garden! Thank you for visiting.*