

REVIEW: 'ROSE' BY CATHERINE HORWOOD PUBLISHED BY REAKTION BOOKS

WIDGET FINN

In 2017 the BBC television programme Gardeners' World invited its viewers to vote for the most influential garden plant of the past 50 years. Unsurprisingly the winner was the rose. What is surprising is that it has taken so long for a book to be published on the subject which charts its botanical, religious, literary and artistic history in fascinating and colourful detail. Catherine Horwood, a horticultural historian who created a glorious garden in Clare, Suffolk, which will be well known to many Plant Heritage members, took up the challenge. The result is a gem of a book, lavishly illustrated, which is so imbued with this most sensuous of flowers that you can almost smell its scent when turning the pages.

'Rose' tells the story of what makes this botanical family so loved, from Cleopatra's rose-petal-filled bed and Nijinsky's Spectre de la rose ballet, to the highly prized attar of rose oil used by ancient Persians and for the most expensive modern perfumes. We learn the significance of the rose imagery of Elizabeth I's embroidered dresses and how to make rose hip syrup and pot pourri. Catherine Horwood wears her scholarship lightly, and informs with fascinating detail. This book will delight both the gardener and non-gardener alike.

ADVICE FOR ROSE GROWERS

FROM SARAH RAVEN

For those of you hoping to grow roses without all that black spot and other fungal problems, try underplanting with salvias, hybrid microphylla and *Salvia x jamensis* to keep disease at bay according to Sarah Raven who uses this method with great success for roses in her cutting garden. She believes that salvias have sulphur in their scent profile and that in the heat of the day they release some sort of natural fungicide into the air to keep the roses clean. The hooded flowers of salvias are also stacked full of nectar attracting plenty of beneficial insects such as lacewings and ladybirds whose larvae then feast on aphids. That also helps to keep roses clean.

OVERHEARD AT THE EAGG AGM

If you have trouble with animals digging up your bulbs try planting them covered in chili pepper powder, especially good when planting peas. It certainly fools the mice!