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# IN THE GARDEN WITH MR. GREENJEANS

by Randy Arnowitz



Randy – Mr. Greenjeans – resides in a potting shed with 200 orchids and his golden retriever “Peaches.” He enthusiastically welcomes your gardening questions; address them to [greenjeansmr@verizon.net](mailto:greenjeansmr@verizon.net).

## Roses In A Cage

I love roses, but my yard has been overtaken by gophers and I refuse to poison the little critters. I haven’t had much luck with gas bombs, traps, or the Juicy Fruit gum trick and Miles, my little Yorkie is afraid of them. Is there any way I can still enjoy roses in my yard in spite of those pesky rodents?

Sincerely,  
**Plagued on East Valley Road**

## Dear Plagued,

I’ll be brief.

Gophers seem to love roses as much as we gardeners do. Maybe more. In fact, roses are usually the first casualties when the gophers move in. Fortunately there are a few things you can try.

Plant your roses in wire baskets. You can buy these pre-made, but I make my own from aviary wire, which is similar to regular ol’ chicken wire but the holes are smaller. If you have more than a few roses to plant, consider buying a roll of the stuff. It’s cheaper that way and eventually you may have to plant other landscape plants in it. Simply make a cylinder large enough for your bare root or container rose, cut and fold up the bottom and put it in the planting hole with a few inches left above ground. Keep in mind that *gophers may eat any roots that grow outside the cage*, but generally the cage keeps pests away from the larger, woody roots and gives the plant a chance to get established. After planting, fold the aboveground wire in towards the base of the rose bush. Don’t cover the base of the rose bush completely with the wire because new canes will grow through it making seasonal pruning not that fun.

Some rosarians sink their roses into the ground in 15-gallon plastic nursery containers to keep the gophers at bay. Santa Barbara rose diva, **Carrie Cooper-Griffith** grows all her roses this way and swears by it. If a rose doesn’t perform well or proves to be disease prone, she simply pops it out of the ground and pops in another candidate. Carrie also likes the ease of directing all the food and water right down there where the roots live. Utilizing containers allows for this.

Lastly, you may want to plant your roses in large containers. Half oak

barrels, terra cotta pots, or wooden planters make suitable homes for roses. I don’t recommend using containers smaller than say, a 15-gallon-size nursery pot. Anything smaller will dry out too fast and you’ll be spending your summer at the end of a hose instead of in the pool. Keep in mind, too that robust, large-growing roses such as ‘Pristine’ may be too vigorous for containers. Miniatures, smaller, more demure hybrid teas or a floribunda like ‘Bill Warriner’ would be better choices. In other words a ‘Julia Child’ or an ‘Ingrid Bergman’ would be much more content in a wine barrel than, say, a ‘Barbra Streisand’ that after a few seasons would grow restless and need to be transplanted into the ground.

## Shedding Light On Cymbidiums

Here is my problem. My cymbidium orchids seem very healthy. I feed them often and their foliage is a beautiful, lush, dark green. However, I get very few, if any blooms. My neighbor practically neglects hers, yet gets plenty of blooms. What am I doing wrong?

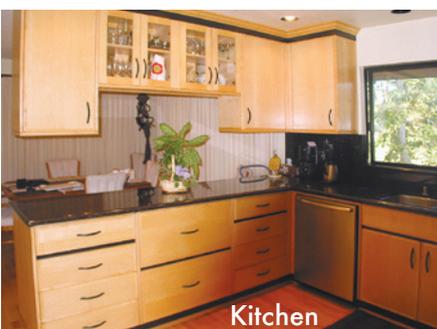
Signed,  
**Seymour Flowers**

## Dear Seymour,

Sounds to me like you are not giving your cymbidiums enough *light*. During the cooler months, these outdoor-grown orchids can take full, *all-day sun* (not reflected), while in the summer they do best with very bright, yet dappled light, like under a thinned out oak tree. In other words, if you are shading them under a tree during the hottest months, bring them out into more light as the weather cools. Then, as summer approaches move them back into less intense sun. A good rule to follow is to give them enough sun to turn the foliage a slightly yellowish color. Give it a try. *My*

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