

Home Gardener's Guide To

Growing Desert Roses

CATH GRIMSHAW

HOME GARDENER'S GUIDE TO GROWING DESERT ROSES

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CHAPTER

Our Journey

Growing up, I was blessed with parents who believed that a happy child is a dirty child; I am thankful for a childhood spent mostly outdoors. My parents grew a lot of veggies and fruit trees, as did both neighbours, but we still had pretty things in the garden too. This was my early introduction to growing flowers.

I have my loving and supportive hubby by my side who, along with our three kids, makes my life extremely busy but happy. We also have some of the best friends anyone could hope for, and it was by complete accident that two of these friends introduced us to growing desert roses.

Bruce and Perry owned a nursery and gave us a plant one day, saying, “This is for you, it’s a little different—strange, but it is exactly like you ... beautiful.”

So, from that day on, (thank you Bruce and Perry!) my (our) love for these plants grew and became somewhat of an obsession.

Life rarely turns out how you expect but I believe you eventually end up exactly where you should be. So here I am, writing that book I never thought I would, and hoping that throughout this book you find some useful information to help you grow desert roses with success. My husband and I



are by no means experts. Have we failed? Absolutely! Did we fail more than once? You better believe it! Did we ever look at each other and wonder why we persisted in trying to grow something we knew very little about? Yes! We did all of those things ... Why? Well, we had been given this plant, it struggled to survive and flower, but when it did we were, as they say, 'bitten by the Adenium bug'. Our half-dead, struggling, poor excuse of a plant finally thanked us for our persistence and gave

us a flower. It was nothing more than a common pink flower, but we loved it.

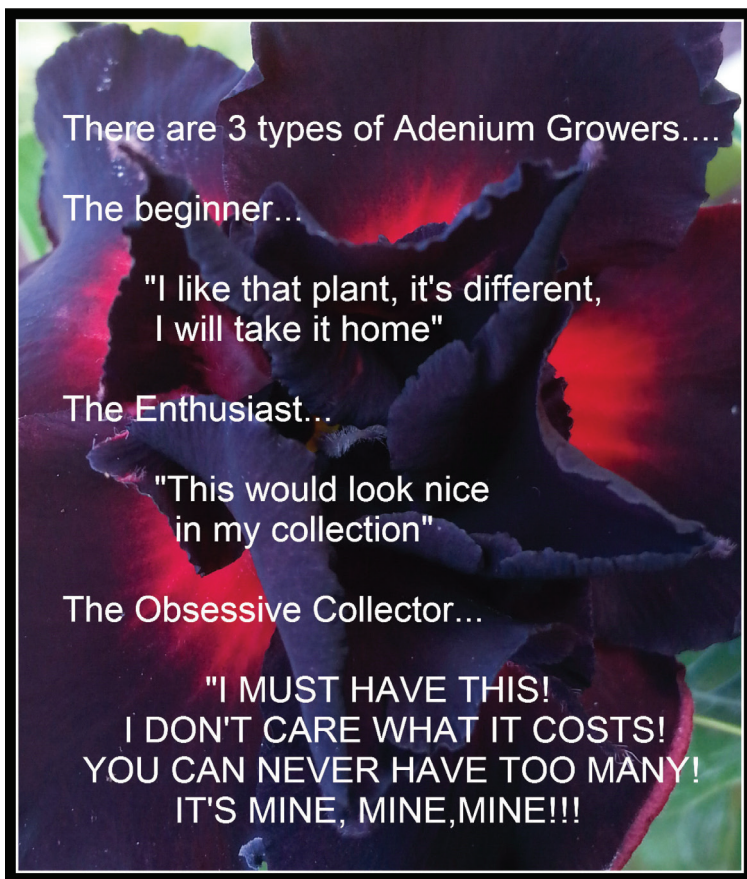
So from this point on, we searched for information to help us to grow them more successfully, but often came up empty-handed. We had owned and run a traditional nursery for years providing a variety of plants for the home gardener, but never had we specialised in one plant species only. We Googled, spoke to other growers, and experimented—everything I guess that you may have done or are doing.

Our biggest learning curve was trial and error. In the beginning we lost hundreds of seedlings simply because we didn't understand a few crucial points (I will talk about this in more depth later). We had been in the nursery industry for years, we knew about growing plants in pots—it was our business to know!—yet we had never before come across a plant that did not want to flourish under our care (in a traditional nursery) and grow as we expected it to grow. This little darling preferred a bit of neglect, which is the exact opposite of what most plant requirements are in garden centres.

And test our knowledge and patience she did. Most plants grown under nursery conditions are kept moist and fertilised often, all to keep them looking their best for customers to come along and buy. That is how it is done. It was a proven formula to maximise profit and was being duplicated thousands of times in nurseries and garden centres across Australia.

We had reached a critical point. If we wanted to continue to grow *Adenium* plants, we *had* to change our thinking. It was as simple as that! We had to forget what we knew about growing plants in the traditional nursery scene and start afresh.

We are still on our learning journey but happy to say that we don't kill so many plants now!



Our aim with this book is to provide as much relevant information as possible. We are not experts, and I'm sure that when the book is going to print, I will suddenly remember a very important tip that I forgot to include! We simply wish to share our passion for these wonderful plants with you and hope that they bring you, too, plenty of smiles.

