

Rose of the Month: Cajun Sunrise



Cajun Sunrise
Queen of Show
2004 Orange County Rose Show
Shown by Gerry & Gloria Youngewirth
Photo by Kitty Belendez

Our Rose of the Month for March is a splendid exhibition rose that was destined for the trophy table from the day it was introduced, **Cajun Sunrise**. One of the finest new hybrid teas to come along in quite some time, Cajun Sunrise is a cross of two excellent show roses, Crystalline x Elegant Beauty. Bred in the United States in 2000 by celebrated Louisiana hybridizer Eddie Edwards, Cajun Sunrise was made available to the buying public in 2001 by Johnny Becnel Show Roses.

Since Eddie Edwards is known for hybridizing great exhibition roses, and since Johnny Becnel Show Roses caters to roses for exhibitors, this was a marriage made in heaven. Cajun Sunrise rapidly became one of the top show roses in the country without the benefit of a wide national availability that is offered to roses introduced by major distributors like Weeks and Jackson & Perkins. Since its introduction, Roseshow.com reports that Cajun Sunrise has been moving up in the Top 20 Exhibition Hybrid Tea List in the nation; and the 2004 Roses in Review put it in the Top 10 for big roses.

The most striking thing about Cajun Sunrise is its magnificent color. True to its name, this is the rose that will catch your eye upon entering the garden in the early morning, as the blooms really do reflect the colors of a beautiful sunrise. Cajun Sunrise is categorized by the American Rose Society as a pink blend (pb), which hardly does justice to the luscious blend of pink, yellow and creamy white it presents.

The color has been compared to that of the classic hybrid tea, Peace, with a generous blush of pink on the edges of the petals and a rich yellow at the base, fading to white. It is, however, a much better rose for exhibition than Peace. It is easy to grow, and re-blooms on a regular basis throughout the growing season, making it a great all-around garden rose. Furthermore, these roses have a vase life of four to five days, which makes them perfect for cutting for the home.

Its form is absolutely beautiful, presenting those classic, high centered, spiral blooms that exhibitors adore. The blooms, which generally have between 26 and 40 petals, are full of substance and can grow to as large as 4 or 5 inches across in cool weather. However, they tend to be smaller in the heat. The richly blended blooms, which are somewhat reminiscent of rainbow sherbet, are presented on strong, straight stems and are clothed in a plentiful array of slightly glossy, deep green foliage.

The growth habit of the plant is medium-tall, vigorous and upright, and it averages a height of four to five feet. Although it only has a very mild fragrance, Cajun Sunrise has many other wonderful attributes. For instance, it offers better than average disease resistance, which is a big plus in most gardens; and it is also relatively shade tolerant. I have moved one of my four bushes into an area that only gets about 3 hours of sun a day, and it is flourishing as much as the plants in full sun.

As indicated above, it is not likely that you will find Cajun Sunrise in your local garden center or nursery. However, despite its limited release, this rose has become one of the most sought after exhibition roses in commerce. Reference the picture of the beautiful Queen of Show from the 2004 Orange County Rose Society Show, exhibited by top Southern California exhibitor Gerry Youngewirth.

For those who will go the extra mile to find it--and you will most certainly have to mail order it--Cajun Sunrise will be well worth the effort. This outstanding hybrid tea is available from Almost Heaven Roses on its own roots, Wisconsin Roses on multiflora understock, and from Johnny Becnel Show Roses, K&M Nursery and Cool Roses on fortuniana understock. [Fortuniana preferred in Arizona.]

In conclusion, Cajun Sunrise is not only a great show rose, but is also an outstanding garden rose that is sure to reward you with breathtaking long-stemmed beauties throughout the growing season. So take my advice and add a little morning glory to your garden with the pride of Louisiana, Cajun Sunrise!