

February 2004, Rose of the Month: William Shakespeare 2000

by Suzanne Horn



William Shakespeare 2000
Photo Courtesy of [David Austin Roses](#)

This month's featured rose is *William Shakespeare 2000* (Ausromeo), the newest of the dark red modern shrubs from famous English hybridizer, David Austin. This beautiful velvety crimson English rose should not be confused with the original *William Shakespeare* (Ausroyal), which was less than successful when it was released in 1987 and did not stand the test of time.

William Shakespeare 2000 is the newer, improved version, and it was introduced in 2000 with a limited number becoming available through David Austin Roses in 2002. Its vibrant picture in the catalog was enough to catch the attention of rosarians everywhere,

and the limited amount of stock at David Austin Roses sold out very quickly. The rose was not available for purchase last year, however it is now available in plentiful supply from David Austin Roses for the spring of 2004.

I was one of the few fortunate rosarians to acquire this rose in the winter of 2002, thanks to the early recommendation of my friend and mentor, Lynn Snetsinger, and I now grow four of them. Although I do not believe it will surpass *The Squire* in popularity and trophy count, *WS 2000* is an excellent addition the red Austins, and it is different enough to warrant growing both of these outstanding roses.



As for specifics, *William Shakespeare 2000* has very good bloom size with color that ranges from a dark velvety crimson red in spring to a deep purple

2003 Scottsdale Trophy
Evelyn, Fair Bianca, The Squire, William Shakespeare 2000
Photo by John Mattia

similar to the shade of *Falstaff* during other parts of the year. The fully double blooms are deeply cupped at first, and then open to a flatter, shallow quartered cup as they mature. A medium sized shrub, it has a pleasing growth habit that is upright to four or five feet tall, similar to that of a small hybrid tea. It also has good disease resistance, although the use of a regular spray program is advisable to keep it looking its cleanest and best.

William Shakespeare 2000 has excellent repeat blooming, producing both sprays and one bloom per stem. It is also fragrant with a delicious old rose scent, so much so that I have taken a blue ribbon with it in the Fragrance Class. However, what I believe makes this a truly exceptional rose is its capability to produce an occasional incandescent sheen over a fresh bloom that looks almost like aurora borealis. That magical sheen is very short-lived, but if captured just right, is breathtaking. This quality can also be preserved with refrigeration, but again timing is crucial.

In addition, *William Shakespeare 2000* is a good collection rose for exhibitors, and caught at its most perfect stage of beauty, it is a winner. I've won the Modern Shrub trophy with it at the 2003 Pacific Southwest District Show, plus I had it in two District trophy collections the 2003 Albuquerque Trophy and the 2003 Scottsdale Trophy (see photo). I also had this beautiful English rose in my winning entry of the 2002 National Griffith Buck Trophy.

To summarize, *William Shakespeare 2000* is an excellent choice for both the exhibitor and the home gardener. I highly recommend that you give it a try.