

Heaven scent

It will be a good year for the roses

Since we're talking luxury, I can scarcely think of anything nicer than a house filled with old-fashioned, big, blowy English country roses that smell the way roses used to and whose great fat petals drop off the way they do in paintings by Dutch Old Masters. For the millions of us who live in flats or houses in the middle of cities, bunches of English country roses with their own fresh, sweet smell are one of the best treats that summer has to offer.

Country Roses (www.countryroses.co.uk; 01206 273565) grows 60 English-style roses (a few of the varieties are French) in fields on the Suffolk/Essex border — so no air miles, no carbon footprint. All the roses are scented, most are old-fashioned breeds, and their arrival signals the coming of summer.

Since its roses are grown in this country, Country Roses is a seasonal business, though it has now added some glasshouse roses that extend the season from May to November. While it mostly supplies to the trade, it will send bouquets of its roses to any address in the country from now until the roses finally give out on them. Twenty stems cost £45 while 35 stems cost £75 (plus delivery). On the website you can check the varieties and the colours and Country Roses will do its best to send exactly what you specify. Danae Duthy, who runs Country Roses with her husband Robin Brooks, lists some of her favourites — “the deep pink Bourbon rose *Madam Isaac Pereire*”, which has short stems so they look lovely floated in bowls. Susan is one of her favourite whites, while *Shocking Blue* and *Purple Tiger* have slightly lilac colours. Among her “Fragrant

Favourites” are *Evelyn*, a pale peachy rose developed for Crabtree and Evelyn, and the famous, huge yellow *Peace Rose*, created in France in the early 1940s, which came to symbolise the end of the Second World War.

The Real Flower Company (www.realflowers.co.uk; 01730 818300) also has as its USP the desire to deliver scented English country roses to customers for whom hothouse roses never seem like the real thing. It's a joint effort between Tim Hobbs, who has a farm in Nanyuki in Kenya and was looking for ways of developing it, and Rosebie Morton, who has a manor house in Hampshire and wanted to grow proper scented English garden roses, flowers and herbs. In Kenya the roses grow all year long and are flown to the UK overnight, while down in Hampshire Morton's roses are just coming into flower now. Its bouquets (£35 for 12 roses) are always interspersed with herbs such as rosemary, mint, sage and come beautifully tied, ready to plunk in a vase. Alongside the roses, the company has some gorgeous scented candles, all made from soy and natural wax and scented with essential oils of the sort used in aromatherapy, £30 a time. There are just three: *Garden Rose*, *Jasmine*, and *Rosemary and Eucalyptus*. It also does potpourri in garden rose or a mixture of roses and herbs. Besides ordering online, Selfridges will be selling the candles and the potpourri.

Fresh scented rose petals make lovely biodegradable confetti but they're also sometimes used to pretty up a dining table, and a starting price would be a box for £15 plus delivery. A fantastic present would be a hand-tied bouquet of country roses every month for a year — £420. As Karen Watson, the Real Flower Company's managing director, puts it: “The varieties of the roses and foliage will reflect the changing seasons.” What could be nicer?

