

Godfather of the English Rose, David Austin, who spent 75 years creating new breeds in his quest for the ultimate bloom has died aged 92.

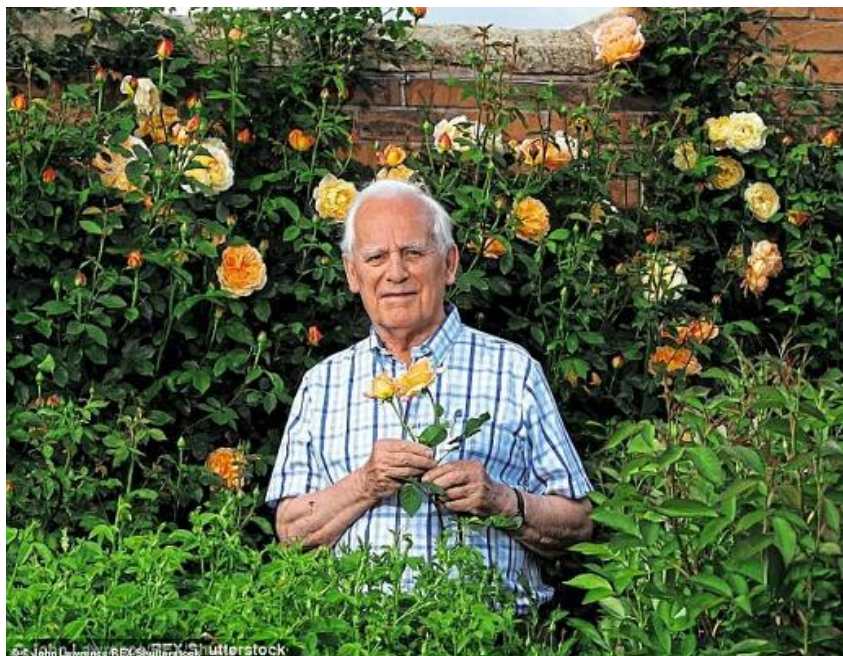
- Farmer's son David Austin bred more than 230 roses after developing interest in them as a teenager
- Mr Austin was determined to create specimens with more colour diversity and the ability to repeat flower
- Won gold standard accolades at RHS Chelsea Flower Show, and an OBE for services to horticulture in 2007.

A horticulturalist known as the 'Godfather of the English Rose' after he spent 75 years creating new breeds in his quest for the ultimate bloom has died aged 92.

Farmer's son David Austin bred more than 230 roses during his extraordinary career after developing an interest in the flowers during his teenage years.

His first English Rose was Constance Spry, launched in 1961. Amongst the expansive collection, other notable varieties include Gertrude Jekyll - twice voted the nation's favourite rose - and more recently, Olivia Rose Austin.

Mr Austin was rewarded for his outstanding contribution to horticulture, receiving gold standard accolades at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show, and an OBE for services to horticulture in 2007.



His son, David Austin Jr and Managing Director of the family company, said: 'My father - or Mr A as he was affectionately known within the wider Austin family - was a remarkable man.'

'His love for the art of rose breeding was truly inspiring; he loved nothing more than seeing the pleasure that his roses gave to others.'

'His presence will be sorely missed within the global family company that he created. But the passion he instilled will continue and we will hold true to my father's vision when he founded the company almost 60 years ago.'

The roses were produced by taking the DNA from existing plants and crossing them together to replicate certain favourable characteristics.

He described the long and arduous process in a 2016 interview, in which he revealed most of the roses bred at his company's headquarters in Shropshire would never get onto the market.

'Most of these won't ever be released,' he said, pointing to the rows and rows of colourful roses in the field. What happens to them? 'They get dug up and composted,' he said. 'There's no point being sentimental!'

Mr Austin said he did not like to choose favourites, but he had a weakness for 'Claire Austin'.

'It's named after my daughter and is an outstanding white rose,' he said. 'But if I had to choose just one, I think pink 'Olivia Rose Austin', named after my granddaughter, has to be one of the best I've ever bred.'

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Asked if he was planning to retire after so many years, he said: 'No, I'm just as excited about breeding roses now as I was when I started doing it as a hobby as a 15-year-old.

'I think my latest roses are some of the best I've ever produced, but they're not perfect.

'I want to breed a really good crimson rose, and continue improving the disease resistance of our roses. That's what drives me on – my love of roses, and knowing there are still better ones to come.'



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