

Roses As Hardy Plants...

Go Figure

by Michael Bowell

*I*F YOU HAD SUGGESTED THAT I WRITE THIS ARTICLE FIFTEEN YEARS AGO, I would have responded with a curt “No way, roses do not have much of a place in my gardens!”

My history with roses dates back to the third grade when I cut roses to take to my teacher. My mother showed me where to cut the various grandifloras (several larger medium-sized blossoms) and floribundas (relatively smaller flowers, but more per stem), then we brought them inside, washed off any dirt or aphids, recut the stems, and placed in water. Those stems (and nasty thorns) were bound together and wrapped with moist paper, then wrapped again in aluminum foil.

The roses grew along the back of the house, about 140' from a twelve-lane highway that was somewhat obscured by a host of taxus and forsythia that had been propagated by my maternal grandfather. The rose blossoms were various shades of warm salmon pinks and yellows, still my favorite colors to this day. My mother's favorite was a hybrid tea that grew in front of our 1950s split level in Gloucester City, NJ. That plant had satin smooth



Carefree Sunshine, a Star Roses introduction—not as compact nor as disease resistant as Knock Out, but still very reliable with spraying.

coral orange flowers similar to the once popular ‘Tropicana’ rose. It also had shiny foliage, the new growth being a pea green that darkened with age. This gift of roses was a June exercise and a tradition that lasted for years, until junior high, when I would have been mortified if it were suggested that I perform such a ritual!

It was a good thing that school let out in June, because, by the end of that month, the roses were covered with aphids and Japanese beetles. The neighborhood children and I would collect the beetles in glass jars. Another month and the Black Spot would also take its toll, totally defoliating my mother's favorite rose. The weeds were kept at bay until the hot summer sun turned the sandy loam to concrete and pulling became impossible.

As I became more interested in gardening, my neighbors introduced me to the arsenal that I would need to keep these roses alive and

producing summer blossoms. I learned about the contact pesticides malathion for sucking insects; Sevin® for chewing insects; Isotox® for both; Funginex® for mildew and Black Spot; and—to show those little bastards that you really meant business—Cygon®, a systemic insecticide that is absorbed by the plant and poisons the insects through



Climbing New Dawn in Background

the plant juices. These are all broad spectrum, non-specific pesticides that have no place in my gardens today.

On my twelfth birthday in 1968, I received my first garden manual. It suggested that, in addition to spraying pesticides, simply hosing off the aphids and mulching to conserve soil moisture would help. We picked up several bags of cocoa bean mulch from Gaudio's on Mt. Ephraim Avenue in Camden and became an instant hit with the neighbors. (Warning: It has been reported in recent years that cocoa bean mulch can be hazardous to dogs which may ingest it.) The manual showed proper pruning techniques for winter and summer pruning, also for planting the new acquisitions from both Gaudios and the Jackson and Perkins mail-order company.

Along with more roses (at least three new varieties per season), I purchased (with my father's checks)

daylilies, lilacs, strawberries, gladiolus, caladiums, and iris for the expanding garden beds. After having had a few successful years with tomato plants (they came bare root, wrapped in newspaper from the Campbell Soup company in Camden, the town to our immediate north on the Delaware River), that summer I also started a vegetable garden with my neighbor. I was starting many of my own seeds by then and the garden chores were taking most of my free time. The roses, though lovely whilst in flower, were beginning to look out of place. Their needs were time consuming and the most unpleasant of my self-imposed garden chores. After several years and the beginnings of the Green Movement, it seemed positively silly and even hazardous to care for these prima donnas of the garden world.

In the late 1970s, I gardened at Chatwood in Hillsborough, NC, the home and garden of Helen Blake, a rosarian who had a collection of hundreds (maybe thousands) of roses of all different types including hybrid teas, china teas, grandifloras, floribundas, hybrid perpetuals, species (both native and exotic), and some antique roses that had been around for centuries. Although many of these were ravaged by Japanese beetles and Black Spot in those very warm and humid summers, others never showed any damage other than some early season mildew. I found myself chatting with rose growers at the local farmers' markets in Chapel Hill and Raleigh and I came to understand these heirloom roses a bit differently.

In developing my Chester County garden, roses certainly were not my priority. Eventually I was smitten by some old roses that I saw on frequent

visits back to North Carolina and decided to try some. I was amazed by the number of roses that bloomed heavily in the spring and actually had foliage that held up all summer. Many of these were large shrubs or 'climbers' that I began to train on trellises, as well as other shrubs, trees, and anything that might support them. My college friend Doug Ruhren encouraged me to try some resilient varieties, as did Dean Rossman, a garden designer on Long Island, who has a keen interest in old roses. I also began working in gardens at the Jersey Shore, where roses performed beautifully, other than some early season mildew.

In 2004, I began to work with Steve Hutton and the Conard Pyle Company, the producer of Star Roses and the new Knock Out® rose series, assisting them with trade show exhibits. I witnessed the cutting edge in new disease resistant and season-long performing roses. I met Bill Radler, a rose breeder and walking encyclopedia



Pink Knock Out®

of rose history, breeding, and culture. It became quite an experience to try the newest varieties in my gardens, many times long before these introductions were available to the general public. Although

the Knock Out® roses lacked some of the charm of my favorites (fragrance and wild habits which I adore), they certainly made up for these traits in sheer flower power, color, and ease of care. I inherited an original Knock Out® rose at one of my Longport Gardens, 'Roseport', and can testify that this plant is a flowering machine of cheery cherry red/hot pink blossoms from early June until November!

One garden peeve of mine continues to be gardens composed of one plant type—iris gardens, daylily gardens, hosta gardens, and, of course,

Rose Rosette Disease

Rose Rosette Disease (RRD) is a rapidly moving, potentially fatal rose virus that first developed in wild roses, but has now been confirmed in cultivated varieties. Symptoms may include excessive, tightly clustered tissue growth (witches' brooms) on tips; thickened, distorted, sometimes spiral, new cane growth; and aborted buds. Infected garden plants usually die within two years or sooner. It is thought that mites or another vector spreads the virus. The most efficient way to stop its spread is to keep all *Rosa multiflora* cleaned out wherever possible and to be alert to disease on garden roses and take immediate action.

If you see a rose with suspected infection, you should destroy it. We have seen it in some Rainbow Knock Out® roses where one or two of a group get it and go downhill fast—within a growing season—and other plants of the same variety growing in the immediate area look healthy and have remained unaffected for two entire seasons after we removed the diseased plants. I have a cherished climber that first showed symptoms two years ago. I keep the part of the cane that continues to show infected growth cut off, the remainder of the plant still grows normally and flowers consistently with normal buds. For photos and more information, go to <http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/450/450-620/450-620.html>.

Disease-resistant Roses

Knock Out® series (Star Roses). Feature compact shrubs to 60"; excellent disease resistance; continuous reblooming in several colors.

Drift® series (Star Roses). Ground-covers to 30"; excellent disease resistance; continuous reblooming in several colors.

Rosa 'Wekcisbako' Home Run® (bright flame red) and **Rosa 'Wekphom' Pink Home Run®** (Weeks Roses). Excellent disease resistance; more sprawling than Knock Out® and takes longer to recycle into bloom.

Rosa 'Radmore' Morning Magic™ (Star Roses). Bill Radler introduction; medium climber sporting fragrant, large, shell pink flowers; resistant to Black Spot... look for other colors in next three years!

Rosa 'Radwhite' White Out™ (Star Roses). Another Bill Radler introduction; compact grower with good disease resistance, not quite to Knock Out® standards; contrasting dark foliage; heavily covered by single white dogwood-like blossoms... a favorite of this author.

Roses for Containers

Rosa 'Meipicdevoj' Icy Drift® (Star Roses). Dwarf groundcover; pure white double blossoms from early summer until frost, abundantly borne in large clusters; excellent disease resistance; 1-2' x 2-3'.

Patio Trees (Star Roses) Knock Out® and Drift® Series grafted 'on a stick'.

Coming Soon - A mini-double knockout. A dwarf mutation reduced in size by 80% with Knock Out® qualities!

rose gardens. This practice leads to static plant combinations and provides 'banquet conditions' for insects and disease. It also leads to overuse of garden pesticides which then whack the entire ecological balance. I prefer to have dynamic groupings throughout my gardens that incorporate small trees, shrubs, climbing roses, and shrub roses, combined with a host of other flowering shrubs, perennials, tropicals, and container plantings.

I have a number of cats, dogs, and garden visitors roaming my clients' and my own gardens. For many reasons I choose not to spray the traditional poisons—the main being safety and the fact that the chemical sprays just do not work that well overall.

I have learned to live with insects and diseases and have found ways of coping with them. I also find that solutions sometimes occur if I just do nothing. I adore watching the many colorful



You will not witness this if you care for your roses with a chemical arsenal

insects do their thing and have learned that the bees going for nectar rarely sting. Wild birds also do their part (I keep up feeders year round), as do chickens and turkeys, which adore

Japanese beetles. I frequently collect beetles in the early or late hours of the day when they are most subdued. I simply tap them off the roses into buckets of plant refuse and water, which are then given to the fowl. Aphid populations can be hosed off, or eventually predators such as ladybugs find them.

In many gardens, deer are brutal. We find that roses treated with the deer repellent Liquid Fence™ are less likely to develop Black Spot, probably due to the spray residue that provides a shield. Grooming the plants and removing old, diseased foliage also works, as does leaving the roses dry at night. Wilt-Pruf™ and FreezPruf™ coat stems in the

winter months and further discourage later disease, while guarding canes from winter desiccation.

Roses are typically heavy feeders and benefit from compost, added to their planting holes and used

as mulch during the extremes of summer and winter weather. Though I use liquid fertilizers to boost the young plants, I seldom fertilize them in that manner beyond the first season. I use Osmocote® the first few years. Pine straw helps to conserve soil moisture, protect from extremes in soil temperatures, and buffet the canes from winter winds. Roses do prefer sun, but I do well with them in semi-shady areas with tall but open trees. Pruning the roses allows air circulation and helps keep them looking well. Again, the most disease-resistant varieties are the

Consulting Rosarians

A Consulting Rosarian (CR) is a member of The American Rose Society who is dedicated to educating and assisting anyone interested in growing roses. Google the Del-Chester Rose Society, mhuss.com/dcrs, and see tab for Consulting Rosarians.



photo ©Michael W. Bowell

Tequila, a Meiland 2006 introduction, shown growing in the author's Chester Co garden, has excellent disease resistance, especially once established. Establishment is a known factor in true hardiness and RRD resistance. Tequila is listed as attaining 4'x 5', however, this particular plant grows consistently to 8' plus.

most reliable in challenging growing conditions.

The Knock Out® series is still the best bet for disease resistance and continuous flowering, but others such as Milwaukee's Calatrava™ (another Radler introduction sporting excellent disease resistance and recurring double white fragrant flowers on compact plants) continue the trend in truly tough, hardy roses. Calatrava's traits make it an excellent container specimen. It survived in pots and in the ground here without a bit of damage this past winter. Radler and Star Roses have also introduced Morning Magic™, a medium-sized climber to twelve feet. Its fragrant, large shell, pink flowers bloom prolifically and the

Give Roses Time To Mature

Often, as with many perennials, roses do not display their best characteristics the first few seasons until they reach mature size and strength. When I first acquired *Hydrangea* 'Endless Summer', I was unhappy with its first and second year's performance and felt it didn't live up to advertised virtues. By the third season, its acclaimed attributes were apparent, making it well worth the wait. You may experience similar first-season frustration with even the best rose. You won't see Black Spot on the cultivars mentioned in this article, but may notice a few minor instances of mildew, especially in an early hot, wet season. Don't worry; site the plant well, give it plenty of air and fertilizer, and allow 2–3 years to fully develop size and hybrid vigor to produce a beautiful specimen.

Rose Convention September 16 to 18

Hosted by the Philadelphia and Del-Chester Rose Societies

Sheraton Inn on Rte 30 (Lancaster Pike) in Frazer, PA

Friday and Saturday night Dinners and Speakers

Saturday Rose Show from 1-4 P.M. (free admission to visitors)

Sunday Garden Tour at Michael Bowell's Garden Sunday from 11:30 A.M.

Special Guest Steve Hutton (Star Roses) will chat about new roses.

Refreshments will be served

Open to convention registrants ONLY

For information, contact Patricia Bilson, patbilson@yahoo.com.

plant is extremely resistant to Black Spot. Be on the lookout in 2012 for Sunshine Daydream™, the first hybrid tea (traditional garden rose) to win a double AARS Award in a two-year, no-spray trial.

There is no reason not 'to go out and smell the roses' in your garden this summer!



Michael *Bowell* lives and gardens on five acres in Charlestown Twp, Chester County, PA with his partner Simple, along with three dogs, nine cats, and assorted fowl and reptiles. He is best known for his passion for tropicals, color, and an effusive 'Nature-on-Steroids' style. Michael writes frequently on horticulture-related subjects

and presents slide lectures on topics from Container Gardening to Orchids. His work, Simple's garden photos, and his contact information can be viewed at www.createascene.com.

Ed Note: For a full-color version of this article, go to the HPS/MAG web site, www.hardyplant.org.

Some of the rose plants mentioned in this article, including Milwaukee's Calatrava™ and Knock Out®, will be available at the May 15 auction during the Members' Fair & Plant Sale.

The Mystery of the Churchyard Rose

By Harriett "Drew" Monshaw

THIS ROSE WAS ONE OF MY EARLIEST GARDENING MEMORIES. I was about six years old when I first noticed it. Summer at the shore was just beginning. Most mornings, I'd wander over to play at my cousin's house three blocks away. On the corner of his street was a small church. In the churchyard, over the 2' crenulated wall, bloomed clusters of small fragrant light pink roses. They pleased me. I'd slow down to take a better look.

Fast forward to 2001, the year I began landscaping and maintaining that same churchyard. Because I needed plants that bloomed during the summer when the church was in operation, I re-

moved most of the unknown, once blooming rose plant—didn't fit the landscape plan. But for sentimental reasons, I transplanted two shoots to the back wall where they couldn't be seen. Except for cutting them back, I forgot about them until this summer. Now I was desperate to know the rose's name. What pushed me over the edge?

In May of this year, the owner of the next door property put up a 5' plastic fence. He warned me that, "If those roses are going to climb my fence, I'll cut them down." I tried explaining there is no such thing as a climbing rose, but it fell on deaf ears. I told him I would cut them back after they bloomed because I needed photos of the rose in bloom in order to identify it. It was now or never. Plant fanatic versus plastic fence fanatic.

Bill Koz was not familiar with the rose. He forwarded the email and images to those he thought might be able to identify an older rose. Luckily, one of those people was Pat Pitkin, an "old rose" aficionado, who immediately recognized the plant. She wrote, "These roses look like my 'Dorothy Perkins' rambler that I received from my grandmother. They were popular in the forties and were identified by their mildew! They usually start to bloom as the other once-bloomers begin to quit. Flowers from Grandma Whit's original bush were in my mom's wedding flowers, June 20, 1930 in Connecticut."

I was thrilled! With that knowledge, I did more investigation. Thus the plant profile of this vigorous "climber" and prolific bloomer, see box lower left. 'Dorothy Perkins' thrives at 85th St. & Lan-

dis Ave, Townsend's Inlet, NJ. Come visit this dainty, but exuberant, rose this June.



photo © Harriett Monshaw

Dorothy Perkins inflorescence



photo © Harriett Monshaw

Dorothy Perkins habit

I had to know its name. But how could I identify it—so many cultivars and so little time?

Rosa 'Dorothy Perkins'

Flower: 1–1½"; petal count 30–35; cluster size 15+, fragrant.

Hips: orange elongated 0.5 x 0.3"

Foliage: dark glossy green, orange in fall

Canes: bright green and procumbent, 12+'

Seed parent: *R. wichurana* (Sp, single white flower; procumbent)

Pollen parent: *R 'Mme Gabriel Luizet'* (HP 34 petals, pink, 1877)

Culture: tolerant of poor soils and drought; zones 6–9

ARS rating 6.9

History: Introduced by Jackson & Perkins Co. in 1901, the rose was named in honor of Charles Perkins' granddaughter. In 1908, this rose won top honors at the Royal National Rose Society and then quickly became one of the most popular and widely grown roses in the world.

I contacted the West Jersey Rose Society. They put me in touch with member Bill Kozemchak of Levittown, PA, a man of a few hundred rose plants. I sent him an email with some images of the rose in bloom and its habit. I included the following information:

- ☛ light pink clusters, blooming once in early June (years ago it was later in the month)
- ☛ canes are bright green, lax, and mounding on the ground
- ☛ leaves tend to be mildew prone, especially as blooms fade
- ☛ planted between 1923 and 1947.

Classified Ads

The HPS/MAG Newsletter accepts garden-related classified ads. The cost is \$3 per line (approximately 40 characters or spaces per line), with a minimum of \$20 per ad. For more information, contact Barbara Bricks, 610-388-0428, bcubed32@aol.com.

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We welcome all contributions. Contact Barbara Bricks, bcubed32@aol.com.