



Rose Letter
The Heritage Roses Groups

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The *Rose Letter* welcomes letters to the editor, feedback on articles, and submissions of articles and announcements. Deadline: April 5. Send to The Editor, address above.

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OUT WITH THE OLD

Rosarians nationwide have recently found themselves dismayed to learn that Descanso Gardens has been dismantling various sections of its five-acre rose garden. Descanso, about twenty minutes from downtown Los Angeles in La Cañada, opened its rose collection in 1994.

In the late fall of last year (2015) various Old Garden Roses began to be removed with the aim of “replacing aging roses that were near the end of their lifespan” with “superstars.”

Now all the gallica roses are gone, apparently with albas and centifolias to follow. After all, we were told, “the history of rose breeding . . . has dead ends.” What are these dead ends? Gallica genes can be found in the majority of modern roses. The ‘Apothecary’s Rose’, ‘Rosa Mundi’, ‘Tuscany’, ‘Violacea’—these still popular roses after two centuries are dead ends?

And who are these “superstars”? Surely the four roses just mentioned are as much superstars by virtue of their longevity as are ‘Julia Child’, ‘Mr. Lincoln’ or ‘Marmalade Skies’ for their popularity. Replacing historical roses with the latest bestsellers is replacing education and history with popularity and profit. It is also truncating the family tree of roses in the garden. In with the superstars and out with the lore of roses that made the superstars who they are.

The removal of whole classes of old roses betrays the “unique and specialized botanic collection of historical significance and rare natural beauty” of Descanso’s mission statement. Furthermore, what is *rare* about the beauty of a hybrid tea, a floribunda, or a patio rose? They are today’s common roses. And with their history wiped clean, there won’t be much to teach. Nor will growing rose collections similar to those already in most municipal gardens provide much incentive to visit the rose collections in Descanso.

The Editor



The empty bed of gallica roses

THE TWO ROSES OF PIERRE VALLET

Darrell g.h. Schramm



At the Antiquarian Book Faire in February 2015, I succumbed to the lure of a beautiful, lightly tinted, copper engraving of two roses by Pierre Vallet. A few hundred dollars, after some bargaining, and the engraved drawing was mine. The fine detail, the delicate lines, and the shading reveal an expert’s hand in rendering botanic accuracy of blooms, prickles, stems, and leaves. Its date is 1623.

I had never heard of the artist, nor was I familiar with the two roses as so named in the picture. Just who was Vallet? And what were those roses? Were either of them still in

circulation today?

Pierre Vallet (d. 1650) was born in 1575 in Orleans but relocated to Paris. At first he worked in the Royal Gardens of the Louvre, established by Henry IV in 1590. (Incidentally, a purple gallica was named much later for King Henry IV, though it was a synonym for ‘Adele Heu’, a gallica bred by Vibert.) There Vallet worked with the royal botanist Jean Robin (1550-1629) where he refined his knowledge of plants as well as his ability to portray them as a draftsman and engraver.

The Queen, Marie de Medicis of Florence—Henry IV’s second wife—appointed Vallet as the French court’s first botanical painter. In 1608 he published *Le Jardin du Roy Très Chrestien Henry IV*, containing 75 plates of plants accurately drawn from both Jean Robin’s garden and the Royal Gardens. Unfortunately, the pages are not numbered nor

are any plants identified on their respective plates. This florilegium (an illustrated book of garden plants) was among the earliest of its kind.

In 1610 Henry IV was assassinated, and his son, then age nine, became King Louis XIII, his Medici mother ruling as Regent until he became of age. Thirteen years later Pierre Vallet, now designated Royal



Gardener, Royal Embroiderer, and Royal Botanical Painter, produced a second volume, *Le Jardin du Roy Très Chrestien, Loys XIII, Roy de France et de Navare*. With some omissions and mostly a duplicate of the first florilegium but with twenty additional plates, the book's illustrations were really intended as patterns for embroiderers, tapestry weavers, and painters. That purpose may explain why the book contains only two illustrations of roses, for, according to rose historian Gerd Krussmann, Marie de Medicis intensely disliked roses in paintings.

Those two engravings are figures 165 and 166 on the same large page. The upper rose is labeled 'R. flore Carneo' and the lower 'Rosa alba Multiplex'.

'Flore Carneo' seems to be a very early Damask Perpetual. "Ah, the mysterious Damask Perpetuals!" writes Brent Dickerson, declaring them "obscure in their origins, even 'way back when!" The so-called 'Monthly Rose', he continues, was known in Italy by 1633 and in Holland and England by 1669. Ah! Even earlier this small, pale, double Damask Perpetual, also known as 'Blush Monthly', 'Quatre Saisons Carne', 'Rosa omnium calendarum', 'Tous les Mois', 'Italian double everlasting Rose', and 'Flore Pleno Carneo'—names mostly indicating its repeat blooming trait—apparently was first mentioned by Dionysii Joncquet in *Hortus* in 1659. But now we see it named in Pierre Vallet's book of 1623. Furthermore, this may be the same rose which Montaigne saw when he visited Ferrara, Italy in 1580, a rose, he wrote, "which



Moss rose

thorny canes wore a full mail of straight prickles. I wondered if the rose might not be Pedro Dot's 1932 'Golden Moss', a peach-colored flower. This one seemed much pinker than the photos I had seen of 'Golden Moss'!

Should you find yourself on the ancient Silk Road to Damascus, which is considered the world's oldest, most continuously inhabited city, you have certainly lost your way to the Damascus Pioneer Cemetery in Oregon. There among the gravestones and greenery, the light spills softly, even on the hottest of days, and there the pathless green of tended grasses allows you to wander freely though the old cemetery accentuated with the glory of old roses. Of the thirty or so pioneer cemeteries I visited, this was one of my two favorites. Visit it if you can.



Left: Mme. Plantier or Mme Legras de St Germain
Bottom left: Pink china?
Bottom right: Entry sign

sometimes edged with tiny hairs. The plant produced no prickles.

Under a pine and in considerable shade, the Winnie Rinkley gravesite of 1902 flaunted yet another huge white rose shrub, an arching plant without prickles, like the others, whose incurved central petals showed a button eye. Was it because the bush was partly in shade that its blooms were mostly solitary or twain? Unlike 'Mme Plantier', 'Mme Hardy', and 'Mme Zoetmans', 'Mme Legras de St. Germain' is known to produce many solitary roses.

By the N. Krotsch headstone and from within a tall lilac bush, two sturdy stems of light chartreuse green, a full, fat, deep pink rose on each, leaned out like two beauties peering from an upper window. They were either Bourbon or Hybrid Perpetual.

Hidden as the plant was, the roses were difficult to study. With their large roundish leaves, no prickles except on the pedicel, and the cup-shaped flowers, the blooms reminded me at first of 'La Reine', but I knew it was not. The more I observed, the more I believed the rose plant to be 'Mrs. John Laing'. Would that some rose authority could verify my supposition.



Of course 'Dr. Huey', that constant visitor of gardens and cemeteries, who like an unwelcome guest refuses to leave, was determined to show up at this cemetery. I found him emerging from a huge box shrub—a slow jack-in-the-box. Semi-double, red petals with pale yellow stamens surrounded by a small white halo, plain sepals, but virtually thornless as far as I could see. This last characteristic made me doubt my identification momentarily, for my own 'Dr. Huey' which I grow on a pillar, is lightly armed with scattered prickles. But like mine, it was given to blackspot. A few yards away, another 'Dr. Huey' had shrugged his way out, also from a box shrub.

A most intriguing moss rose flourished beside the Gothfred Jackson grave (1893-1913). A very full somewhat pink rose, it was almost shaggy with thick, greenish yellow-gold moss on pedicel, sepals, and receptacle. The pink bloom was a mottled color, rather like the pink and copper shades of the Tea rose 'Clementina Carbonieri'—or perhaps it was blotched by weather or age. Overall, the flower with its quilled petals appeared ruffled. The long, very

blooms every month of the year.”

According to the French nurseryman Fillassier in 1791, this year-round rose or 'Tous les Mois' came in three varieties: “flesh-colored, white-flowered, and very pale pink.” Abbe Le Berriays in 1789 also refers to the “double flesh-colored” ‘Tous le Mois’ rose and Rossig in 1799 to ‘Rosa calendarum carnea’. ‘Flore Carneae’ would be “flesh-colored” (a description I shun, preferring incarnadine, blush, or light tan). The canes bear fairly straight prickles in some profusion; the pedicels are bristly. The leaves consist of five leaflets. Unfortunately, the rose is no longer with us. Of the four Autumn Damasks mentioned in the old literature, the white, the blush, the pink, and the red, it seems that only the pink remains.

The other rose, situated at the bottom half of the engraving, is 'Rosa Alba Multiplex'. In Prevost's catalogue of 1829, it is called 'Rosa Alba Maxima Multiplex'. Like the previous rose, this one goes by several names, including 'Alba Maxima', 'Alba Flore Pleno', 'Angelica Alba', and the 'Jacobite Rose'. Technically *R. x alba maxima*, it also appears as 'Alba maxima multiplex' in manuals and catalogues of 1817 (Audibert), 1833 (Keller), 1836 (Boitard) and 1838 (Gore). A tall, lovely specimen grows in the old rose garden of Sacramento's Historic Cemetery.

Like all Albas, 'Alba Maxima' can endure wind and cold.

Growing taller than six feet, it produces its flowers in small clusters. Oddly, the receptacle of the central flower is hispid and glandular, whereas those of the flowers surrounding it are smooth. Around the center of the white blossom, the coloring is nankeen, a buff or pale brownish yellow. The grey-green leaflets generally come in sevens. The bristly pedicels generate bracts. The prickles are abundant, hooked, and large. The fragrance is alluring. 'Alba Maxima' seems to be the white rose in paintings and



illustrations of medieval times.

If 'Rosa Flore Carneo', alias the 'Monthly Damask', were still in circulation or commerce, I would have acquired it. Fortunately, 'Rosa Alba Multiplex', alias 'Alba Maxima' is. In February I bought the engraving; in April I bought the white rose. I am content.

"'Goldfinch', an old rambler, very vigorous, very sweet-scented, and when I say sweet-scented, I mean it....'Goldfinch' is a darling; she is my pet, my treasure, a mass of scrambled eggs."

Vita Sackville-West

ANNOUNCEMENTS

March 26: Early Bloom Tour at Historic Rose Garden, Old City Cemetery, Broadway & 10th Streets, Sacramento, CA

April 9: Open Garden, Historic Rose Garden, Old City Cemetery, Broadway & 10th Streets, Sacramento, CA

April 16-17: Apple Blossom Festival, Sebastopol, CA where The Friends of Vintage Roses will host a booth, selling old roses

June, first week, dates to be announced: Great Rosarians of the World to honor Dr. Wang Guoliang, Chinese rose historian and rose breeder, The Huntington, San Marino, CA

October 1 & 2: National Conference of the Heritage Rose Foundation, The Huntington, San Marino, CA



between each set of leaflets which were lanceolate, serrate, and somewhat shiny. The canes were smooth and "thornless." I believe the rose is the noisette (sometimes used as rootstock) named 'Manetti' of 1835. It grew beside the Breithaust obelisk headstone.

Under a canopy of two different trees at the sunken gravestone with



the word Father carved upon it, grew another pink rose. This one was full, producing flowers in clusters up to twelve on smooth canes with widely scattered falcate prickles. The foliage appeared soft, rather Damask-like, comprised of mostly five leaflets, many of them sessile. The buds

showed themselves to be round, the flowers rather flat, often with a button eye, their colors a rich pink changing to a mottled, paler pink, and mauve, all colors on the same cluster of blooms. The sepals were plain, but the stipules—a fragrant clue—were very fringed. I am sure this was the 'Seven Sisters' rose, a Multiflora hybrid dating back to 1817.

In three different locations, large mounds of thickly full white roses reared their impressive growth like cattle egrets studding the unlikely green hides of sleeping pachyderms. All three plants were virtually thornless, and all exuded a strong, lovely scent redolent of Damasks. The clusters of white roses at the Elaine C. Goosic headstone did exhibit a few prickles beyond the lateral stems. Was this rose 'Mme Plantier' or was it 'Mme Legras de St. Germain'? Both are very similar and suggest Noisette in their genes, but while the former is usually listed as a Noisette hybrid, the latter is usually classed as an Alba or Alba hybrid. Peter Beales agreed that the two roses are difficult to tell apart.

Between the graves of Henry Hilleary and Elsie Rogers sat the imposing hillock of the second plant, lush with white roses. The buds, with a touch or smudge of pink, displayed both plain and somewhat foliaceous sepals. Their receptacles exhibited a few glandular hairs. The fresher blooms revealed a pale lemon-yellow center. "Aha!" I said to myself. "A telltale trait of 'Mme Legras'." Their scent was nearly intoxicating, wafting into the air several yards away. The small clusters of three to nine or so flowers drooped with the weight of the large roses. The matte foliage was comprised—again—of five and seven leaflets to a leaf whose stipules were sometimes naked,



Mme Legras de St. Germain

THE ROSES OF DAMASCUS

Darrell g.h. Schramm

On the fourth of June 2015, I found myself on the road to Damascus—Damascus Pioneer Cemetery, that is, in northern Oregon. This beautiful and spacious old cemetery is located slightly southeast and not far from Portland, in a rolling green countryside of rural roads and minor highways interlaced with small towns and farms.

Surrounded by trees and shrubs, the cemetery unfolded before me as I walked, like a carpet woven from a palette of greens: celadon, emerald, jasper, malachite, olive, and sea water green. It was a place of verdant silence where one could sit, stand, or stroll in privacy and peace, independent of death and yet among it. Here, I thought, one could go when feeling necessary to be apart or alone. Green denotes life. I recalled the poet Lorca's words, "*Verde, verde. Que te quiero, verde.*" And there among the greenery I discovered eight or ten different antique roses, half of them without prickles (what is usually referred to as "nearly thornless").

The first rose I came upon seemed to be a China hybrid, semi-double or just double, pink with pale yellow stamens in a white halo, growing in clusters of three to fifteen or so blossoms. Small harmless prickles appeared on the pedicel and receptacle. The stipules were edged with a small, uneven hairs or glands. Leaflets grew in fives but mostly sevens; tiny stiff bristles grew

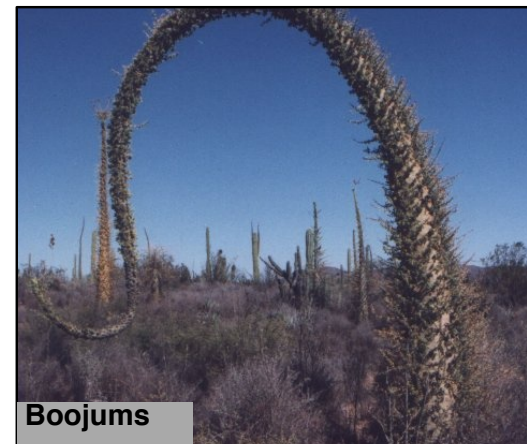
Rosa minutifolia--A Unique Rose Rediscovered Part Two

Don Gers

Exploring in the morning we saw that many rose bushes had blooms. On tiny pedicels, the solitary flowers were nestled among leaves along canes or short laterals, magenta to light pink with a corona of golden stamens and sweet rose fragrance. Equally pretty, the buds were covered with glistening red bristles and a green crown of pinnatifid sepals. Long, thin needlelike prickles covered the canes. The few dried hips we found were tiny, colorless and practically invisible.

Southward, the rose was nearly everywhere. At El Rosario, 100 miles below Ensenada, we encountered Boojums (*Idria columnaris*) with *R. minutifolias* growing beneath them. Called *Cirios* by the Mexicans because of their resemblance to tapered church candles, these gigantic succulents rise above the desert floor like leafless tree trunks with

snakelike, sinuous branches dominating the landscape with their weird, otherworldly appearance. The name "boojum" comes from Lewis Carroll's "The Hunting of the Snark", a bizarre mythical creature dwelling on desert shores. As the story goes, Mr. Godfrey Sykes, educated in England, was on an expedition to Mexico in



Boojums

1922 when, looking through his telescope at some distant mountains, he suddenly perceived the unusual trees and exclaimed, "Ho, ho, a boojum, definitely a boojum!"

The roses here were dwarf. We were at the end of their range and

the beginning of the Viscaïno Desert.

Those few days, spent painfully wading through thorny rosebushes searching for hips and exploring the places where *minutifolia* grew, paid off with a handful of seeds and appreciation for the marvelous adaptations the rose had made to its harsh environment.

The Baja peninsula is a land of little rain. There, water is the currency of life especially evident in the towns: those with water were neat and thriving; without it they looked parched and poverty-stricken. At El Rosario the average annual rainfall is five inches. Just how little water that amounts to about a quart per rosebush per week. Imagine what would happen to your roses if that's all the water they got! But *R. minutifolia* has learned to cope. The key to survival under the baking Baja sun is to be small and limit water loss. That is why *minutifolia*'s leaves are so tiny (about the size of your smallest fingernail) and oddly constructed with wax-like surface, curled edge and felt lining. At the height of summer when drought is extreme, the bushes go deciduous, dropping leaves to become dormant, biding time till the rain returns, like a true xerophyte. After a good rain, the speed with which the rose can break into growth and bloom is amazing. In my Santa Rosa garden I've seen flower buds appear just fifteen days after the first big Fall rain and bloom three weeks later.

Another remarkable adaptation is its ability to bloom and set seed in the wintertime. In Baja this doesn't mean snow and freezing but merely less heat and more moisture. The ripening of its seed appears to be accelerated, too. On a mesa near Colonet in Baja, we found vigorous, blooming plants next to a leaking irrigation pipe with a few green hips. It was February but we collected the seed anyway and after planting, surprisingly they sprouted.

Hips were generally scarce. Searching numerous colonies we hardly found one or two hips per bush, yet the rose covered extensive areas, often one to several acres. But it didn't take long to discover *minutifolia*'s method of propagation--I literally tripped over it. Not at all inclined to rootspread, *R. minutifolia* sprouts wiry, thin canes that grow vertically then recurve strongly toward the ground. On reaching the soil surface, the tip of the cane curves up again, looking rather like a skinny snake looping along the ground. Where the cane touches the

ANSWERS TO QUIZ ON PAGE 12

1. *Rosa sericea*
2. Harison's Yellow or *Rosa Harisonii*
3. *Rosa roxburghii*
- 4-5. *Rosa laevigata* and *Rosa stellata*
- 6-7. *Rosa moyesii* and *Rosa chinensis*
- 8-9. *Rosa chinensis* and *Rosa gigantea*

PHOTO & ILLUSTRATION CREDITS

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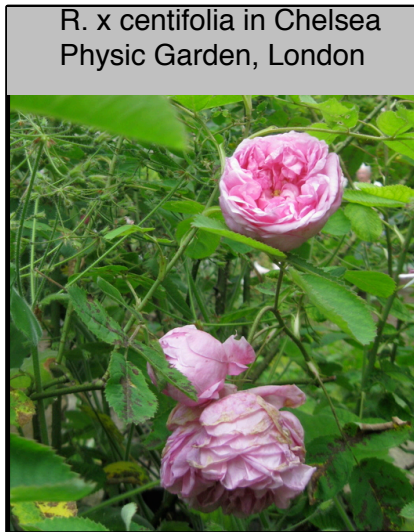
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more than 100 centifolias in his catalogue; William Paul in 1848 listed about 75 but by 1872 he listed a mere eleven. Bobbink & Atkins in 1938 listed only nine, but four of those (such as 'Alain Blanchard' and 'Anais Segales') are not centifolias. By 1965 the numbers had not changed much: Joseph Kern, one of two or three nurseries in the USA that still sold old roses after mid-20th century, carried a mere ten centifolias, the number increasing to eleven in 1975. Vintage Gardens of California offered sixteen varieties in 2006; by the time it closed in 2013, the number had increased to about 25. One might like to believe the centifolia was making a comeback, given that last number, but that is not the case.

Centifolias can be found in many more European nurseries than in the United States. Most stateside nurseries today carry none, one, or two of this class, except for Rogue Valley Roses in Oregon, which offers about a dozen varieties. Despite the overall decline in popularity of centifolia proper, its mutations, the Moss roses, have barely decreased in popularity over the last 200 years.

The Englishman H.H. Thomas collaborating with Walter Easlea in 1913 wrote, "The old Cabbage rose is admitted to be the most fragrant of all roses, and the plants are remarkably long lived. I have heard of beds of this rose over eighty years old." Welcoming a rose with such fragrance and such longevity to my garden is, despite its hazy origins, my form of ancestor worship. To echo Confucius, I wasn't born with knowledge, but "I am one who is fond of antiquity, and earnest in seeking it there."



sand, roots may sprout and another rosebush will grow and repeat the cycle. I observed that wind, sand and fog, constant elements of the Baja environment, assist this growth habit.

Blown about by the wind, bark on the cane tip gets rubbed away by sand, and a callus forms from which roots readily sprout.

On the windy mesa near Colonet, I saw cane tips becoming anchored to the ground by single large taproots. Windblown sand collects in mounds around the rooting canes, further anchoring the roses. Here indeed was an interesting phenomena, a rose multiplying itself by "leapfrogging" over the land. Writing in *Pacific Discovery* in 1965 about the desert plants of Baja, George Lindsay discussed the nomadic growth habit of the creeping devil cactus "like a mass of giant caterpillars" rooting as they grow, creeping worm-like over the sandy Baja plain.

"Conceivably one plant could grow forward for centuries, dying off behind as it progressed, covering many miles and achieving a kind of immortality." The same could be said of *R. minutifolia*, I believe, an immortal, truly "ramblin' rose." Almost no attention has been given to this fascinating habit except an interesting footnote in a paper on plants and insects of northwestern Baja by T. D. A. Cockerel, published in *Transactions of the San Diego Society of Natural History* in 1941, who observed this "remarkable feature" of *R. minutifolia* and noted the "inconvenience" it causes "to travelers on horseback, the horses putting their feet in the loops and stumbling." Elsewhere it's been reported tip-layering is an alternative reproductive strategy where seed reproduction is unreliable.

From our camping experience, sleeping on cots without a tent, I learned how wet the fog in Baja can be. Everything would be saturated



in the morning: us, our camping gear and sleeping bags, as if it had rained during the night. Droplets of condensed fog hung like pearls from cactus spines and the prickles of minutifolia bushes. It's interesting to speculate whether fog moisture may be a critical factor in minutifolia's survival. In a 1972 *Pacific Discovery* article about the fog desert of central Baja, Richard Felger wrote that "fog supports vegetation overly rich for the scant rainfall." He believes the boojum trees' "odd shape seems to facilitate condensation of fog moisture" and points out other plants depending on water from fog. As for minutifolia, its bristly canes and looping habit seem to form a good fog condenser, channelling moisture down to the roots. And even in death, the canes continue helping extract dew from fog.

Occasionally I've noticed a fragrance from the foliage of *R. minutifolia*, something like lemon-scented eucalyptus with an edge of sage. But the crushed leaves of the rose have a harsh chemical smell like another



desert shrub called rabbit bush, nauseous with a taste reminiscent of turpentine. Yet the rose is a favorite food of the little Baja brush rabbit whose Latin name, *rosaphagus*, was suggested by his "penchant for this rose."

Since the day of its discovery, the position of *R. minutifolia* in the greater scheme of rose species has been a problem. George Engelmann, the botanist who originally described it, thought minutifolia came closest to the Pimpinellifoliae. Francois Crepin gave it a separate Section, the Minutifoliae, and the opinion of Boulenger, the European rhodologist, was that Minutifoliae and Pimpinellifoliae exhibited parallel evolution.

T. D. A. Cockerel suggested possibly a separate genus, and the most recent study by Walter H. Lewis at the Missouri Botanic Garden recognizes its uniqueness but also its reproductive compatibility with other roses. So Lewis gave it subgenus status, Hesperhodos, the Western Rose which includes the Apache rose, *R. stellata* and its varieties in New Mexico, Texas and Arizona, separated by 600 miles of mountain, deserts, and sea from Baja and minutifolia. Only three other subgenus classifications have been established: Hulthemia for 'persica',

the 17th and 18th centuries the Dutch perfected *R. x centifolia*. Whether we call it the Dutch Hundred-leaved Rose, the Provence Rose, or Rosa Provincialis, the name refers to a place where the rose was popularly grown. Perhaps early botanists and rose growers attempted to make distinctions between those introduced in the Low Countries from those introduced in France. Indeed, Auguste de Pronville and Louis Pierre Chesnel in 1838 definitely distinguish between *Rosa centifolia* and *Rosa provincialis*, as do a few other French writers.

It would be so easy if those roses with the large cabbage

]



shapes had been developed in the Netherlands, say, and those of other shapes in France, but such is not the case. Regardless of where the centifolias were perfected, interbred, or sported, they are a mixed race, damask and gallic strains in most of them but clearly another strain or other strains as well. Quite likely, by the time they were brought to Europe, they were already an ancient hybrid rose.

According to Gravereaux's estimation, Empress Josephine, who began her garden in 1804 and died in 1814, grew thirty centifolia varieties. In 1837 Julien Alexandre Hardy listed slightly



Chapeau de Napoleon 1885

were famous for their floral painting; as early as 1607 Ambrosius Bosschaert the Elder painted a vase of flowers containing a centifolia.

The Dutch did seem to have a point to their objection in calling the centifolia the Provence rose, for it is fairly certain that they did refine that rose. But there exists no known evidence that the rose originated in the Netherlands; and, in fact, as I've shown, it seems quite unlikely. Indeed, the centifolia may well

have been imported from locations east into more than one location west. Marseille is situated in the French department of Provence where even today *R. x centifolia* grows in profusion, especially near Grasse about 85 miles as the crow flies from Marseille. There, fields upon fields of the flower are raised for the perfume industry. As a port city Marseille was a popular stop of the late Medieval trade routes. The centifolia could have been introduced then to France as well; thus, the Provence rose.

As Gertrude Jekyll and Edward Mawley and others are quick to point out, "Provence is the Cabbage Rose (*R. centifolia*); Provins is *Rosa gallica*." The point here is, to avoid confusion, let us immediately eliminate *Provins* in this discussion.

But it hasn't helped to clarify matters that Philip Miller in 1733 or 1735 introduced yet another name, *Rosa provincialis*, probably recalling that his fellow countryman Gerard had called it "the Great Provence Rose." On the other hand, Behcet Ciragan claims that the synonym *provincialis* for *centifolia* refers not to Provence as is usually asserted but to the seventeen "provincie," the seventeen provences of the Low Countries, the area where in

Platyrhodon for the *roxburghii* species, and Eurosa to include all the rest.

In the garden, *minutifolia* is practically evergreen and blooms off and on year round. My experience has taught me it resents wet feet, preferring a well-drained position, and would be ideal for banks and erosion control, especially if helped along by burying the cane tips. Rooted cane tips, I've found, are the best means for propagating and passing the rose around. It's reported to be frost tender; I can only add that young plants have survived a low of 17 °F in my Santa Rosa garden. Planting the bud site below soil level in cold-winter climates might help it to regrow when frozen back.

That *R. minutifolia* is a horticulturally interesting and desirable species seems apparent from the efforts expended to obtain it. In the December, 1882 issue of *Revue Horticole*, a French horticultural journal, the first illustration of *minutifolia* was published, accompanying an article lauding its uniqueness and noting seeds were available from the French firm of Vilmorin and Company. In the journal *Garden and Forest* of 1889, we learn these Vilmorin seeds were sold for one Franc each. In today's dollars that amounts to \$4.88 just for a single seed! Apparently hoping to cash in on their discovery, the Orcutts and Parry went back to Baja in January of 1883 and dug a thousand rosebushes they transplanted to the Orcutt's Nursery in San Diego. Nearly all of them died; even the Vilmorin seeds failed. The London correspondent of *Garden and Forest* reported in 1889 Kew Gardens had sprouted seedlings from an Italian source, but apparently these didn't survive long either.

After these expensive disasters, it seems no further effort was made to bring *minutifolia* into cultivation until the late 20th century.

And just over a hundred years after the original "wild west" discovery in Baja in 1882, the first native colony of *Rosa minutifolia* to be found in the United States was discovered in 1984 on Otay Mesa in San Diego County. Ironically, this American colony of *minutifolia* was so close to San Diego, only four miles east of the road that Parry Jones, Orcutt, Pringle and Levi travelled to Bahia de Todos Santos some 50 miles further south.

The botanist Jack L. Reveal, doing an Environment Impact Report (EIR) survey, is often credited with the discovery of the Otay Mesa

colony. But at the U. C. Berkeley Jepson Herbarium, Jack Reveal's collection #2846 for February 6, 1985 has an additional note on the label stating "Discovered by Royce B. Riggan." I contacted Royce Benton Riggan, Jr.. who reluctantly admitted the fact, not wanting to detract from Jack. Royce said Jack can't be faulted for missing the rose during his EIR plant survey because it wasn't in bloom. (From my own experience in Baja, I know that without flowers or hips, *minutifolia* looks identical to Chamise, *Adenostoma fasciculatum*).

In 1984, Otay Mesa, where the American colony of *minutifolia* grows, was a no man's land of windblown trash and dumped garbage only two miles from the International Border overrun by crime, principally drug trafficking and smuggling of illegal aliens. It also was heavily impacted by motorcycles and other off-road vehicles. The day Royce discovered the rose he was leading a group of government officials doing an EIR examination of the mesa for development. A knowledgeable naturalist, Royce was aware of any rare or endangered plants from Jack Reveal's survey, but unexpectedly encountering an unfamiliar blooming shrub, he stopped to investigate. Immediately he recognized it was a rose from the flowers and hips but was confused and consternated by its presence because it had not been reported before. And to top that, the party was nearly overrun by guys with guns on ORV's!

Today the violent Otay Mesa is nearly tamed with new border fencing and extensive residential and commercial development. The wild *minutifolia* colony directly in the path of development was dug up and relocated, protected by chain link fencing.

Rosa minutifolia is no stranger to vicissitude, whether from nature or humans. But through the efforts of many people, including Mary Ann and Jack Olson of



mind that as yet there was no distinction between reds and pinks, red being used for its whole range of colors until the 18th century or so, pink not yet used as a color. Also keep in mind that no species rose has 100 petals; species have only four or five petals, so this rose was already a hybrid.

The next known reference to what we call the centifolia was made by Matthias de l'Obel, one of a trio of renowned Flemish botanists. In his *Plantarum* of 1576, he included among his 1,486 engravings one of the rose in question, which he thought was a damask. His description of it in his *Kruydtboeck* (*Herbal Book*) of 1581 is that of a centifolia. Obviously impressed by the rose, he adds that a gardener, N. Sanders in Antwerpen, gave him the rose, also remarking that others grew it—a woman near the town of Gorcum, and a Secretary Willem Martiny.

Two years later the great botanist Clusius, another of the famous trio, mentions the cabbage rose in his 1583 edition of *Horti Germaniae*, and again in more detail in his 1601 edition. There he reports having received two *Rosas centifolia batavica* from a John Hoghelande, one which bloomed in 1591 with 120 petals, "approaching white somewhat." He also reports that such a rose grows in Frankfurt am Main, Germany.

In England, John Gerard briefly discusses the centifolia in his *The Herball* of 1597, calling it "the great Holland Rose, commonly called the great Provence Rose," that latter name one "which the Dutch men cannot endure, for say they, it came first out of Holland, but by all likelihood it came from the Damaske Rose, as a kinde thereof, made better and fairer by art." The art of breeding, or of painting? Certainly the Dutch



its market prosperity in the 13th century. Antwerpen, too, was a main port city of the Spanish Netherlands in the 14th century, especially for Portuguese trade with its connections to the Far East. In sum, *R. x centifolia* in any of its stages of development to the cultivar it is today could have been borne along the Silk Road or by sea or both until it reached the Low Countries where it was further refined.

All that may seem to be conjecture, but we do have some very early evidence that points to the existence of the centifolia outside the Netherlands. The Zoroastrian scriptures of Persia, the Pahlavi *Bundahishn*, which date back as far as the ninth century, mention a "hundred-petalled rose." Assuming that rose still exists, the reference could allude to the yellow *R. hemisphaerica*, since no color is given, but it just might refer to an early variety of centifolia. By 1307 Petrus de Crescentius, an Italian writer on horticultural and agricultural topics, mentioned a hundred-petalled rose growing in Batavia (the old name for Holland). Given the Silk Trade Route through Persia and Turkey and onward to Salerno in southern Italy, then north to the Low Countries, the centifolia rose may indeed have reached the Dutch by the very early 14th century.

Rosarian and professor of Eastern Studies, Behcet Ciragan dismisses a later arrival of the centifolia to the Low Countries, hypothesizing that the Netherlands were in too much turmoil during the mid- and late 1500s to focus on growing roses. (Perhaps. But during the Spanish Civil War, while bombs were storming upon them, the Spanish rose breeders Camprubi and Dot continued to hybridize their roses.) Again, that the centifolia arrived even earlier is what I have attempted to show as a strong possibility, especially given Crescentius' reference to such a rose in Holland in 1307.

After that, we have no mention of the centifolia for over 200 years. In 1515-16, Abunasri Heravi of Persia writes of sixteen kinds of roses in his *Ersad al-zera'a*, among them the "yellow hundred-petalled rose" (no doubt *R. hemisphaerica*) and the "hundred-petalled red rose," apparently *R. x centifolia*. Keep in

the San Diego Heritage Rose Group, the public was made aware of the rose. It was preserved and protected. Mary Ann once said, "It's too bad they are [locked up] behind fences. Wouldn't it be great if San Diegans planted the rose all over their city, a unique San Diego symbol"—and rose.

Endnotes: This article is a revision of a paper presented to the Australian National Heritage Rose Conference, Orange, N.S.W. in November, 1995. I would like to thank the many people who contributed with interviews, research or in other ways: Dan Campbell, Holly Cheong, Pat Cole, Judy Gibson, Bruce Hanson, Nancy Holland, Jim Kirby, Greg Mason, Dick Moe, Mary Ann and Jack Olson, Craig H. Reiser, James L. Reveal, Royce B. Riggan, Jr., Lawrence Smith, Val Shirk, and not least but lasting, Michael Tallman.

Bahia de Todos Santos: Place names during the period of Spanish exploration of the New World generally followed the calendar of Saints and Feast days of the Catholic Church. The name bestowed on a place depended on the date of discovery and which Saint or Feast day was celebrated on that day by the church. "Bahia de Todos Santos" (All Saints' Day) was likely christened on November 1st, traditionally the Catholic Feast Day of All Saints. Another interesting (and humorous) version of the naming of this Bay appeared in a newspaper story written by Charles C. Parry shortly after his botanical trip to Baja (reprinted in *Madrono* 1:220, 1929): "The distinguished Spanish navigator who, in the sixteenth century, first visited these waters, apparently having previously exhausted the catalogue of saints, concluded to corral them all in a body by naming this 'Bayia [sic] de Todos Santos' (Bay of All Saints) and so the name has come down to us."

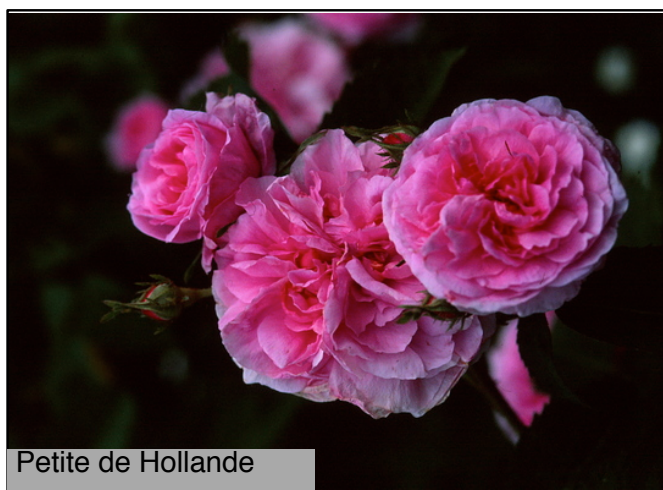
ROSE QUIZ

1. Which species has only four petals to a rose?
2. What is the true rose name of The Yellow Rose of Texas?
3. The Chestnut Rose is the nickname for which species?
- 4-5. Which two rose species are mostly trifoliolate (have only three leaflets to a leaf)?
- 6-7. Pure red is found in only which two rose species?
- 8-9. From which two species do most modern recurrent roses descend?

(Answers found on page 24)

CENTIFOLIA ROSES

Lily Shohan
Rose Letter, Feb. 1977



Petite de Hollande

Confessing to a preference for Centifolia roses is like admitting to a taste for New York State wine. There is the same half-ashamed, half-defiant attitude, same defensiveness. Not even the most confirmed admirer of the old “cabbage” roses could call them good garden plants. For the most part they sprawl and droop with best blooms ending up face down in the mud or buried in a mass of foliage. They are peculiarly susceptible to weather damage. They get blackspot as easily as any Hybrid Tea, so how to explain their appeal?

An exception to above criticisms is ‘Petite de Hollande’, which forms a sturdy upright bush some three feet high and wide. It blooms early and is covered with bright pink, quarter-sized blooms. This is the best possible introduction to the Centifolia group just because it differs so widely from the class. ‘Rose de Meaux’ is a smaller version, with flower and plant smaller and the blooms a pale pink. ‘Pompon de Bourgogne’ is another and even smaller Centifolia, with upright habit of

But where did the centifolias come from? Their ancestry travels back centuries, and holding a bloom or bouquet of them in my hands, so do I. With them I pass through the era of Napoleon and Thomas Jefferson, of Sir Issac Newton, Shakespeare, Galileo, the Aztecs, Gutenberg, William Tell and maybe even Tamerlane. To grow such a rose in my garden is enriching, enlivening my knowledge, linking me to humanity and events across time. These lovely roses tell me that not all in our expendible and wasteful culture that seems outdated need be updated. The world survives because of its past, its roots. I grow among other old roses and some modern ones only a few centifolias. But again, where did they originate?

Because some *Rosas x centifolia* were imported from



Flanders and Holland into France and England in the 16th through 18th centuries, most rosarians and plantmen have assumed the rose originated in the Low Countries. But that is a mere assumption. Not a species but a genetic mix, (hence the X in *R. x centifolia*), their ancestry appears to go back many, many centuries.

Since Roman times, say around 200 A.D., when Rome traded with Constantinople and Alexandria, that empire also frequented trade routes from Italian ports to the Low Countries. And Constantinople was connected to ancient land trade routes from China through Scythia (roughly Ukraine and southwest Russia today) and Bactria (roughly Afghanistan and parts of Iran). During the early Middle Ages, trade routes of the ninth and tenth centuries into Europe also led to Bruges (in today’s Belgium but then a part of Holland), which was one of the great trade cities known for its huge commercial fairs, as was Ypres, which rose to the height of

their suggestive perfume, their artless beauty, and—in the case of centifolias—all of these as well as in their voluptuousness. Like buxom beauties, they lean from their beds toward us in our gardens as through from Amsterdam windows as if to say, “Take me. I’m yours.”

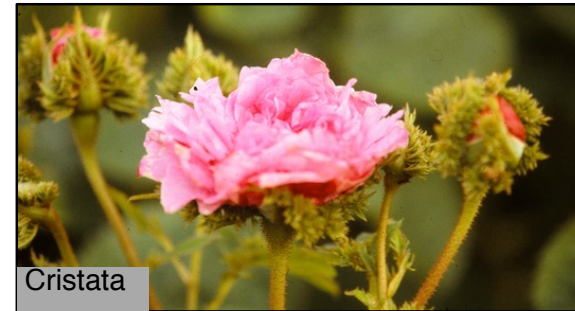
In shape, the bush is the opposite of the modern hybrid tea. The typical centifolia exhibits open growth with lax, quite thorny canes and stems that seem to plead for some support. Both its large, coarse leaves and large blooms generally droop. The weight of the flowers on young shoots can cause the stems to arch and bend, often flopping the canes and flowers onto the ground. Like the modern tea, however, the centifolia’s plant form is not elegant, the former rigid with unsightly naked legs, the centifolia often open in the center when the long, arching canes become procumbent.

But consider the perfumed flowers. Some have the lush globular form with a concave center of 100 or more petals made famous in the Dutch and Flemish paintings of Jan Davidsz de Heem, Jan van Kessel, Johann Hinz, Rachel Ruysch, Jan van Os, and others of the 17th and 18th centuries. Others show a flat, densely packed or layered shape, sometimes quartered, often with a button eye. Most of them have a lavish, opulent, almost ambrosial fragrance. The latter quality alone speaks reason enough to give way to centifolias in the garden. David Austin has written that the “gentle colors and their more natural growth” make them and other Old Garden Roses fit into any garden scheme.



growth, tiny flowers and a disastrous susceptibility to blackspot. *R. centifolia minima* is truly miniature, smallest of all.

The best example of Centifolia form is *R. centifolia cristata*, the crested moss, or ‘Chapeau de Napoleon’. The fringed sepals make this the easiest rose to recognize, and therefore there is no possibility of having a misnamed, unidentified bush. Another certainty is *R. centifolia bullata* with large, dimpled and crumpled leaves, described as “lettuce-like”, toned reddish as they unfold. These two exhibit the true globular form of *R. centifolia* [*R. x centifolia*] and form a basis for comparison. A few years ago a bush purchased as *R. centifolia* failed the



comparison test when the bloom was checked against *Cristata* and *Bullata*. The newcomer was a Centifolia all right but lacked the full form a Centifolia should show. Another bush that failed the test was purchased as ‘*Communis*’. Since ‘*Communis*’ or ‘*Common Moss*’, *Bullata*, and *Cristata* are all sports of *R. centifolia*, the blooms should be nearly identical. In this case, ‘*Communis*’ turned out to be ‘*Gracilis*’, a smaller bush with smaller, paler blooms.

‘*Juno*’ is one of the most appealing of the full scale Centifolias, a large elegant flower in the palest of creamy pinks,, with fold on fold of delicate petals. ‘*Rose de Peintres*’ is somewhat similar but smaller. ‘*Blanchefleur*’, pure white, must have the most delicate petalage around. It is actually translucent, and also easily damaged by rain. A variety common around old farmhouses in this area [New York State] has been tentatively identified as ‘*Double Brique*’. Extremely double, it balls easily and needs dry weather for proper development. This one is blush pink, almost white.

‘*The Bishop*’ [*sic*. She means ‘*The Bishop*’] is an odd character among Centifolias since the coloring is magenta, more like a *Gallica*, in fact very similar to ‘*Charles de Mills*’. ‘*The Bishop*’ is easy to identify

since almost every side bud exhibits a vegetative center, a green steeple from which it may have derived its name [steeple—church—bishop]. It is only in play early in the season.

All these large centifolias make rather gaunt bushes which droop under the weight of the blooms. They benefit from some kind of support. They are hardy, vigorous plants and easy to care for, but they don't make good subjects for formal beds. Use them in a shrub border, along a fence or to the rear of an informal planting.

What is the basis of their appeal? Well, for one thing, they combine a delicacy of substance with a refined color clarity. In modern roses the best comparisons would be with 'Royal Highness' or 'Confidence'. And neither of these has the simple sweetness of Centifolia fragrance—a pure essence of spring.

Note: words in brackets have been added by the editor.



The Bishop

CENTIFOLIA, EAST & WEST: A SYNTHESIS

Darrell g.h. Schramm



Centifolia

Jacques de Gheyn (c.1565-1629)

It's often called the Cabbage Rose. But not all the varieties of its class display that large globular, leafy fullness of a cabbage. Furthermore, many people mistakenly think of the large blooms of the hybrid perpetual or the bourbon rose when they speak of the Cabbage rose. But the rose is really *Rosa x centifolia*.

The centifolia is named for its hundred (or more) petals. Confusingly, the word *folium* in Latin means both leaf and petal. Yet that's not hard to understand; we speak of cabbage leaves, not cabbage petals, and yet a cabbage has leaves beyond its head; and at

one time when distinctions in language were broader, a flower was thought as having a corolla of leaves just as a peduncle or branch has leaves.

Why even write about centifolias? So few gardeners grow them anymore. And it certainly hasn't helped the centifolia's popularity that even the best known writers of roses give them short shrift. To others the centifolia is just another old rose. But they appeal to me. And they appealed to most of the great flower painters of the world as well. I am in grand company.

Old roses. Where does their attraction lie? It lies in their often mysterious origins, their sometimes tantalizing history,

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