

ROSE LETTER



The Gallica Issue

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Rosa Gallica Purpurea Velutina, Parva.

Rosier de Van-Eden.

ROSE LETTER

THE HERITAGE ROSES GROUP



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

'La Belle Sultane'--The Beautiful Queen	2
Descemet: Father of Gallica Roses	4
Roseraie Val-de-Marne and Europa Rosarium, 2019	12
Complicata	17
The Many Roses of Parmentier	19
The Gallica as Nordic Rose	26
'Sissinghurst Castle'	28
Announcement: Save the Roses Auction	29

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‘La Belle Sultane’ – The Beautiful Queen

Stephen Hoy

‘La Belle Sultane’ belongs to the class of roses described by Graham Stuart Thomas as “the most ancient, the most famous, and the best garden plants among the old roses”: the Gallicas. Tradition says *R. gallica* was brought from Palestine to France by Thibaut IV (Count of Champagne and Brie, and King of Navarre) after a crusade launched in 1239 A.D. Whether true or not, the town of Provins, located in the region of Champagne, became a center of cultivation for a nearly single cerise-colored seedling of that red rose used by apothecaries for making medicines, conserves, and confections. During the next six centuries the rose’s medicinal and herbal attributes led to its distribution and naturalization throughout mainland Europe and Britain. Known by several names, including ‘The Rose of Provins’ and ‘The Apothecary’s Rose,’ *R. gallica officianalis* became the predominant representative of the species.

By the end of the 18th century Dutch breeders, while creating hundreds of Centifolia cultivars, were also raising a large number of Gallica seedlings. Claude-Antoine Thory, editor of the text in Redouté’s *Les Roses*, noted that over 500 named varieties of Gallicas were available from Dutch catalogues. According to François Joyaux, at least fifteen cultivars thought to have been exported from The Netherlands prior to 1815 are in commerce today. Those imported into France were given a French name, often more than one, thus confusing identification.

‘Holoserica’ and ‘Mahaeca’, names referring to multiple roses, some nearly single, some very double, all have in common purple velvety petals. Redouté included an engraved plate of one in the third volume of *Les Roses* identified as ‘Le Maheka a fleurs simples.’ Of it Thory wrote in 1824, “Too well known to require a description, this is one of the most magnificent of all the gallicas. It demands no special care, needing only exposure to full sun to bring out the full brilliance of the colors. Rather rarely, completely single blossoms can be found on it. It came to us from Dutch nurseries almost thirty years ago, and was distributed by Dupont. Several gardeners refer to it as ‘La Belle

Sultane'. "The rose may have been one of the many Gallicas planted in Empress Joséphine's gardens at La Malmaison since it was in André Dupont's collection and he sold roses to her.

So how did a rose, likely from the land of frozen canals and windmills, receive a name that recalls tales of *The Arabian Nights*? To quote a former British Prime Minister, "It is a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma; but perhaps there is a key." A fanciful legend arose that might indeed provide "a key." Marie Marthe Aimée Dubocq de Rivéry was born in the French colony of Martinique, an island in the Caribbean. Like her cousin, the later Empress Joséphine, wife of Napoleon, she was sent to France to complete her education. Returning to Martinique in 1788, Aimée supposedly was captured by Barbary pirates, taken to Algiers, and sold to the Bey ("ruler"). Shortly thereafter, she was presented as a gift to Sultan Abdulhamid I in Istanbul and given the name Nakshidil. After his death, the new Sultan asked Aimée to stay in the harem and raise a nephew, Mahmoud II, who would eventually become the thirtieth Sultan of the Ottoman Empire. Here the legend has a faint ring of truth as Mahmoud II was indeed raised by a woman who taught him the French language. Another small clue: an engraving said to have been made from a miniature painted when Aimée was a young girl is inscribed by the artist, "Devenue Sultane Validé, Mère de Mahmoud II" i.e., "Became validated Sultana, mother of Mahmoud II".

Regardless, 'La Belle Sultane' has found a spot in my garden. I didn't know that Gallicas are not supposed to grow in my climate zone when I purchased it. To my own and many others' surprise, it is performing just as advertised. Its two rows of wavy petals are the most beautiful velvety purple with a small white halo at the base and offset by bright yellow stamens. The blooms arrived this year in mid-April, a little later than some of my other once-bloomers. New growth has a very distinctive vertical habit which will eventually lean outward. Its ultimate height of 5-6' suggests that there may be some Damask influence in its background. The wiry stems have the typical small brown bristle-like prickles that many consider typical of the Gallica class. The foliage has a textured upper surface and is absolutely free of black spot! It sets hips quite prolifically, perhaps accounting for the profusion of 'Mahaeca' variants. A few more Gallicas may find their way to my Georgia garden.



DESCEMET: FATHER OF GALLICA ROSES

Darrell g.h. Schramm

March 30 and 31, 1814: The Battle of Paris was raging in full force. Having intercepted a letter Napoleon had written to his second wife Empress Marie-Louise, the coalition forces of Russia, Austria, and Prussia under Tsar Alexander I had decided to attack the city while Napoleon was still forty or fifty miles south near Fontainebleau. The French Marshall Mortier had attempted to defend the city on the plain of Saint-Denis, but he and his regiment of the Young Guard soon found themselves out of ammunition and, nearly surrounded by Russians, retreated to the trenches and walls protecting Paris.

Apparently it was then that the Russian troops overran the large acreage of roses at Saint-Denis belonging to Jacques-Louis Descemet, the largest collection of roses in France at that time.

Who was Descemet? His reputation has suffered to some degree

because he did not have the role of providing roses for Empress Josephine to the extent that Dupont, Jacques Cels, or Philippe Vilmorin did, and because he was a royalist.

Born in 1761, he had inherited his father's nursery in 1785, a huge establishment growing approximately 6000 roses, about 4500 of which were the popular rose of the time, Centifolias. His parents, like their ancestors since the 16th century, were the superintendents of the Jardin des Apothicaires in the Saint-Marcel district of Paris. Descemet also became the gardener and florist of the King's brother. His nursery list of 1785 contained only about forty different rose cultivars. Interestingly, among them was a 'Rose de Chine', evidence of an earlier introduction of a China rose than is often claimed.

But being on "the wrong side" of the Revolution, Descemet lost most of his clients, including those of the nobility. Deeming it circumspect to relocate himself outside Paris in 1792, he first rented then bought the large grounds with its cottages in Saint-Denis that was to house his enormous rose collection. Resigning his post at the Garden of Apothecaries, he devoted himself thereafter to setting up his new nursery and to the breeding and propagation of his roses, mostly Gallicas. By 1803 he published his own first catalogue, naming about eighty rose species and cultivars, though as yet no new rose of his own.

Because of the blockade during the Napoleonic Wars, the French could not import roses from England or the Low Countries. Consequently, they took upon themselves to breed and propagate roses. Empress Josephine's love of horticulture was an additional impetus. Descemet began introducing his new varieties in 1804, the same year Josephine began collecting roses. Indeed, his productive years coincide with the decade of Josephine's interest in the queen of flowers, 1804-1814. In fact, during this time Descemet became the most renowned raiser of Gallicas, which was to be the most popular class of roses for about thirty years.

By 1814, two-thirds of Descemet's collection was Gallica roses, the other third being species and different hybrids, totaling about 250 different roses. Unlike most breeders at the time, he kept careful notes of his particular crosses. According to Brent Dickerson, Descemet may have been "the first in the West to have practiced controlled cross-

breeding.” Though he was avidly occupied creating new roses, he also served as Mayor of Saint-Denis from 1812 to 1814.

And then the Battle of Paris resulted in the devastation of much of his nursery and Napoleon’s defeat. Determined to continue, Descemet tried to salvage his nursery. Though Napoleon escaped from his exile, after one hundred days of resurgence, he was ultimately defeated at Waterloo. And this time—1815—the English troops under Wellington overran Descemet’s nursery in the fighting—but not before Jean-Pierre Vibert hurriedly assisted Descemet in rescuing thousands of seedlings before the advancing troops arrived. When Descemet’s request for compensation was denied by the French government, he sold what was left, including his breeding notes, to Vibert. Vibert, acquiring Descemet’s incredible collection, albeit in seedling form, generously listed 209 of the breeder’s roses in his catalogue, attributing them to this

remarkable man. One hundred forty-three of those were Gallicas.

Of those Gallicas, fewer than a dozen are still available today. Though some of them are offered by only one or two nurseries worldwide, most of them can be found in private or public gardens. ‘Agathe Fatime’, also called just ‘Fatime’ is one of them, a mottled bloom of crimson-pink. However, because its color is darker and deeper than that usually linked to the pale Agathe sub-category of Gallicas, it may be that the rose has been misidentified over the years. ‘Belle Galathée’, the palest of pink, grows at the Luxembourg Gardens in Paris and at Roseraie de l’Haÿ and is sold only by the Loubert Nursery



Agathe Fatime



Belle Galathée

in France. 'Belle Hélène' of a rosey or delicate pink, also going by the names of 'Aimable Emma', 'Aimable Sophie', 'Archiduc Charles', and 'Clemence Isaure', is sold by three European nurseries. It is known sometimes to produce six sepals. It was named, of course, for the beautiful Helen of Troy, "the face that



launched a thousand ships." The dark 'Belle Rosine' (see p. 2) can be custom ordered from Freedom Gardens in Ohio. Prolific and long-lasting, this dark red rose blending into a dark maroon is one of my very favorite Gallicas. 'Jeannette', a red Gallica, is sold only by Keisei Rose Nurseries in Japan. 'Jaune Henri', a deep pink flower with purple canes, seems a Gallica-Centifolia hybrid. Apparently, Descemet also bred a Portland rose with this name. 'La Favorite', a bright cherry red, is available only from the Loubert Nursery. (The Loubert Nursery sells more of Descemet's roses than any other nursery in the world.) 'Gloire des Jardins', a mauve rose, is sold by one nursery each in France, Germany, and Japan.

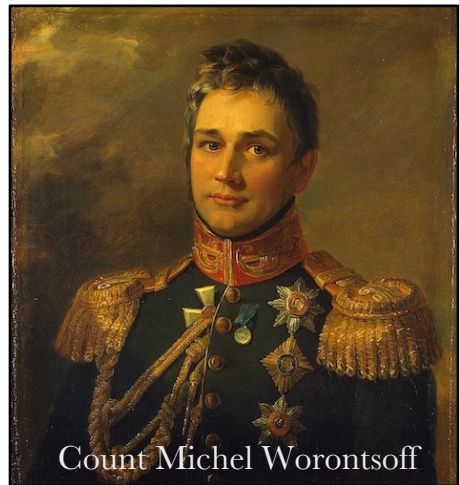


Somewhat more often found of Descemet's Gallicas today seems to be the purplish mauve 'Belle Biblis', to be seen at Mottisfont, England; Sangerhausen, Germany; San Jose Heritage Rose Garden in California, and a number of other public and private gardens, as well as in The Friends

of Vintage Roses collection in California. By far the most thriving and popular of Descemet's Gallicas is 'Empress Josephine' aka 'Impératrice Joséphine'. A veined, purplish pink, sweetly scented rose, it is probably the hybrid of a Gallica and *R. cinnamomea*. The papery petals are silvery at the edges and loosely quartered, surrounded by grey-green foliage whose canes and stems are nearly prickly-free. The spent roses produce turnip-shaped hips. The rose does, however, resent damp and wet weather. These Gallicas have survived; what survives age is classic.

Descemet himself survived his losses. To his rescue came the Minister of Foreign Affairs who offered him a professorship in botany and a directorship of the newly proposed Botanic Garden in Odessa, Russia, a town settled mostly by the French. Its governor was a Frenchman, Alexander Langeron. Descemet accepted the offer and in 1818 found himself living in Odessa. In mid-November of 1819, he began to supervise the 87-acre Botanic Garden, planting trees, roses and other plants, exceeding all expectations of Langeron and his government. By 1824 Descemet had produced a catalogue of roses, seventy percent of which were French. That percentage is not surprising, given that Vibert annually sent Descemet a shipment of roses.

In a startling irony, the Russian General who had commanded the troops in the Battle of Paris against the French, troops who first ruined much of Descemet's rose fields, was Count Michel Worontsoff. As governor of the Crimean region, this very Count became Descemet's patron and protector. The Count lived in the Palace d'Aloupka on the Black Sea within an enormous park where, under the counsel of Descemet, he grew roses. In 1836 while visiting the Count, Descemet was much delighted with the nobleman's roses. For at least a decade until the rose breeder's death in



Count Michel Worontsoff

1839, the two men carried on a correspondence, now in the state archives of Moscow.

At some point, Descemet was consulted for new rose introductions from the West for the imperial Nikita Botanical Garden. Clearly, he was much respected and sought after.

When Descemet had moved to Russia, he was granted a huge parcel of land. There he created a garden comparable to his former one in Saint-Denis. Vibert, his successor and with whom he remained closely linked, sent him more than 250 rose cultivars and species. It became the first important rose collection in Odessa. Descemet named his estate Louisville in honor of his wife. The famous Russian poet Pushkin, who would vacation at a neighboring house, was inspired by Descemet's roses and mentioned them in his verses.

Despite the impressive assortment of roses, however, Descemet's catalogue of 1834 indicates that he did not grow even a majority of the roses he had bred. In the long shipment journey from France to Russia, some of his own roses may not have survived, while others were no doubt the latest roses bred in Western Europe. And though we have no proof that Descemet bred roses in Russia, a few roses by name in Vibert's catalogue suggest he may have done so: 'Comtesse de Langeron' (1820), named for the wife of Odessa's governor; 'Nikita' (1827); and 'Odeska' (1832), a variant spelling of Odessa. But whether or not he introduced those roses to Russia (and sent specimens to France), Jacques-Louis Descemet was not only the owner of the largest collection of new roses in France until 1814 but also the first person to introduce new rose varieties to Russia.

In 1833 he retired from the directorship of Odessa's Botanic Gardens. Six years later he died at age 78.

Yet beyond those Gallicas already mentioned, Descemet lives on in his several roses surviving in public and private gardens today. For instance, the Hybrid Eglantine 'Clementine' and the Alba 'Chloris' are grown in the Sakura Rose Garden of Japan. Regarding the latter, although three or four different women in Greek myths were named Chloris, this rose most likely was named for the nymph who was goddess of flowers. Her name means "greenish." In Roman mythology her name is Flora. 'Chloris' is a lovely ornament in many a public and private

garden today.

'Heloise', sometimes considered a Centifolia, a light purplish-pink Agathe-type rose, mostly thornless, was also known as 'Agate Nouvelle'. It is still for sale in France at the nurseries of Loubert and of Brochet-Lanvin.



According to the prejudice of the author, 'Belle Biblis', already discussed, deserves further amplification. This very double, lovely, scented rose of a violet rose-pink color is an early and profuse bloomer. Typical of Gallicas, its upright stems are inclined to sucker. (For this reason, I grow most of my Gallicas in large square pots sunk into the ground; it works well to contain those

colonizing root systems.) Apparently the rose was named for the "fair Biblis" of Greek mythology. Admittedly there are several variations to her story, but the earliest from the third and first centuries BCE tell that her twin brother fell in love with her but was so horrified at his own passion that he fled his homeland and founded a city in some distant clime, leaving Biblis weeping for his return. The several later Christian-era versions of the story claim that Biblis fell in love with her brother Kaunos "with an unspeakable desire" which drove her so mad that she killed herself, or, alternately, that she wept so long that sister nymphs changed her into a spring or stream.

Of course there may be more than these short dozen roses remaining from Descemet's time. (François Joyaux certainly grows vastly more.) Some roses bred by different nurserymen of the time were given the same names. For instance, both Descemet and Vibert raised a Gallica designated as 'Eucharis'; and while Descemet raised a Gallica

and/or Centifolia called ‘Heloise’, mentioned above, Vibert raised both a Gallica and a Moss with that same name. These were not the only duplicate names. The point is that these identical names have created a confusion with some of the roses so that we cannot be certain that a particular rose being grown or described is one by Descemet.

To look at the other, more polished, side of the coin, we could say that the Battles of Paris and Waterloo, despite their horrors, may have been also a blessing. In lieu of all Descemet’s work being utterly destroyed, thousands of seedlings were saved and later dispersed and sold by Vibert who credited Descemet for his productions and who became, perhaps, the most productive and important rose breeder after Descemet in the 19th century.

That more than 200 years after Descemet’s introductions more than a dozen different varieties of his Gallica roses are still being grown (far more if we include hybrid Gallicas), displayed, and sold is nothing short of astonishing. And that such beauty should continue to survive into the present day deserves promotion, homage, and gratitude.





Roseraie Val-de-Marne and Europa Rosarium, 2019

Jeffrey Panciera

Anne Belovich and I made a trip this June to the Val-de-Marne rose garden in L'Haÿ, France, and to the German Rosarium in Sangerhausen, west of Leipzig. The trip brought to fruition Anne's desire to publish a book on the Gallica roses, a class she has long admired. We were originally hoping to make a first stop at the garden of François Joyaux, west of Paris near Mayenne. After all, he reputedly grows all of the 300 or so varieties of Gallicas, but unfortunately he answered my request for access by telling me his garden is now permanently closed to the public.

Val-de-Marne and the Rosarium have somewhat parallel beginnings, in that they were created about the same time, and each garden had a prime mover. In the case of the French garden, it was Jules Gravereaux. He inherited sufficient shares from the childless Boucicault family, owners of Le Bon Marché, where Gravereaux worked, to be able to retire at 48 and devote the rest of his life to roses. He purchased land in

L'Hay in 1892 and hired Édouard André to design a garden and eventually moved the 1600 varieties of his collection there.

Peter Lambert, a citizen of Trier, Germany, educated in horticulture, an experienced nurseryman and, like Gravereaux, a rose breeder, was the force behind the Rosarium. The town of Sangerhausen was already a center for rose breeding and growing because of a reputedly “rose-mad” nurseryman there named Albert Hoffmann, who ended up contributing his 1100 rose varieties to the garden. The Rosarium opened to the public in 1903.

At this point, their stories diverge. The French garden is a beautifully designed formal, historical rose garden on about 3.5 acres. The Rosarium, situated in a small country town, grew to about 3.5 acres in 1913, but in 1939, adjacent agricultural land was added to bring its area to about 31 acres. The Rosarium has about 75,000 rose bushes representing 6,300 varieties. There is also a collection of about 500 specimen trees and shrubs. The Val-de-Marne collection is about 50% pre-1916 roses and contains about 3,200 varieties.

As far as being user-friendly, Val-de-Marne is much easier for the specialist seeking Old Garden Roses (OGRs). One enters the garden at the middle, facing André's beautiful showpiece. OGRs are to the right, modern roses to the left.

Sangerhausen is so vast, it invites wandering, and the specialist looking for OGRs, after easily locating a few large beds of them, must seek the rest of them using a map with confusing colors and small numbers and letters. But it is a superb garden for wandering. Art installations, water features with appropriate plantings, a lookout, two small cafés in the garden on opposite sides, and above all, near the entrance a huge glass house for eating when the weather is inclement attached to a small cafeteria where meals, drinks and desserts are available. Outside the glass house along the entire north side is a terrace overlooking row upon row of colorful modern climbers. There is no better place to eat lunch in the shade after a morning of wandering or working.

Our schedule was breakfast at the Hotel-Rosarium, work in the garden from about 9:00 or 9:30; lunch at 12:30 or 1:00 PM, then back to work until 4:30 or 5:00 PM at which time we would relax on the

terrace with double scoops of the wonderful ice cream from the cafeteria (best flavors: vanilla bourbon, fresh strawberry, cassis). This was a great reward for a day's work!

Three persons made our trip memorable. First, Heike, the proprietress of the Hotel-Rosarium, a friendly and open-hearted woman always ready to help. I highly recommend her Pension-Hotel at 24 Finkenstrasse, about two blocks from the garden. Second, an old friend of Anne's, Harald, a German rosarian who sent his regrets at first, pleading too much work in his and his wife's business near Hamburg but then stunned us, showing up for one day to be with us, making the four-hour drive for the sake of friendship—a kind and very funny man. Third, we met Hella Brumme in the garden while working. She is the former garden director, a tall, white-haired, imposing lady. Anne immediately knew who she was and said what an honor it was to meet her. She returned the compliment when she learned Anne's name by telling us she had seen Anne's Rambler book in the Rosarium library (Anne gave a copy to the present director in 2017).

An amusing incident followed. An hour or so later, we were working lower down in the garden, and Frau Brumme and her two companions, who must have been doing OGR verifications, were nearby. I was scouting for our next Gallica when I came upon a wonderful plant of 'Capitaine Basroger', the red moss, in full bloom! I enthusiastically called to Anne, "Look, it's 'Capitaine Basroger'!" Then I heard the voice of Hella Brumme calling, "No, no! The label is wrong! That is 'Souvenir de Pierre

Vibert'!" We laughed about it later, but it makes me think that due to the almost volcanic activity and open pollination of 19th century rose-breeding and the rather variable appearance of roses in various growing conditions, we might consider the identity of roses we don't know as provisional. And it brings us back to the fundamental attraction of the Gallicas and all OGRs—not the



Charles de Mills



Belle sans Flatterie



Cora



Orpheline de Juillet

name but the form, the color, the fragrance. A good lesson to end a successful and pleasurable trip.

I must admit that I have much more an appreciation for the Gallicas than I did before the trip. The two most attractive characteristics for me are form and color. The most attractive Gallicas as to form are the flat, multi-petaled blooms that resemble certain hybrid Albas; for example, ‘Charles de Mills’ (‘Bizarre Triomphant’ for the Gallica expert, François Joyaux). I’ve always thought this rose or at least this form of rose served as the model for the rose that appears on certain playing cards of the Queens. In the case of a rose such as ‘Belle Sans Flatterie’, the addition of a circle of curved petaloids in the center is, to me, even more attractive.

The other trait, color, appeals to me most in the dark roses, ‘Charles de Mills’, ‘Le Rosier Évêque’, ‘Tuscany’, ‘Orpheline de Juillet’, ‘Rose des Maures’, ‘Cora’ (one I had never heard of), and ‘Pourpre Charmant’, which has the form of ‘Charles de Mills’ but is darker. But some Gallicas do not appeal for these characteristics but simply because they are

spectacular; 'Gil Blas' comes immediately to mind, but there are others I have certainly forgotten. In general, one can depend on the Gallicas to have good strong fragrance. It's a fine class of roses and I look forward to Anne's book.



Pourpre Charmant

IMAGE CREDITS

Front Cover: 'Tuscany' Redouté
 Pages 4, 7 bottom, 10, 14, 15 top & bottom, 17, 21, 22, 23,
 24 & back cover Darrell Schramm
 Pages 6 top, 15 middle, 26 Bill Grant
 Pages 6 bottom, 7 top, 11 Etienne Bouret
 Pages 12, 16 Anne Belovich
 Page 19 from the catalogue of Louis van Houtte
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COMPLICATA

The Editor

‘Complicata’, a Gallica, is most certainly a mystery rose. Even Nancy Drew the botanist and her friends have had a difficult time solving the case. This much we know: Around 1864 the zoologist and botanist Jean Charles Marie Grenier discovered and described this rose. He believed it to be a variety of the species *Rosa reuteri*, which over the next two decades or so had its name changed three times by the scientific establishment. Not surprisingly, these changes caused confusion, for Grenier had described three or four variants of *R. reuteri*,



only one of which was ‘Complicata’, but now apparently all variants were subsumed under one changed name.

The situation becomes even more mystifying. The further story is that Jules Gravereaux, having read of this species rose, ordered it from the Otto Froebel nursery in Zurich for his Rosarie de l’Hay, which he was designing and planting in 1902, having in mind to grow every known rose of the time. It seems that Froebel unwittingly sent him the wrong rose, which then became identified as ‘Complicata’. About 23 years later, its identity was questioned. Given the species name changes, given their variants, and given the possible mix-up, botanists at the turn of our century were still trying to unravel the threads of this

complicated tapestry. Do we have the real ‘Complicata’ or not?

But why did Grenier name this simple rose ‘Complicata’? If indeed it is this very rose I grow, some rosarians such as Francois Joyaux claim the name refers to a fold (*pli* in French) or pleat in the petals. Well, perhaps. If I strain the eye and the definition, I might discern a pleat in an occasional petal, but certainly it’s nothing remarkable. Frankly, I think a stronger case could be made for the center vein of each leaf, which is deeply creased. But then we may not even be discussing the original rose. Be that as it may, the rose, a single, is large and beautiful, and as a bush it’s spectacular. The flowers are very bright pink, paling at the center. The leaves are as profuse as the flowers, a soft almost Kelly green—a very full and vigorous plant. Its long, tentacle-like canes, covered with blossoms in season, strive to invade anything nearby. I grow it in a huge, half wine-cask under a mulberry tree that it has begun to climb. It does not shy from the shade. Although a once-bloomer, this tapestry of pink at its peak will arrest anyone who sees it.

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Tricolor de Flandre

THE MANY ROSES OF LOUIS PARMENTIER

Darrell g.h. Schramm

Any horticulturist—let alone a typical gardener—might assume that someone who had bred over 800 different roses would remain in the annals and halls of fame, especially if a number of those roses were still sold and grown more than 170 years later. And yet—is it our short attention span? our fickle taste? our indifference to genius or history? what?—the name of

Parmentier is scarcely known today.

Louis Joseph Ghislain Parmentier (August 1782-April 1847) grew up in a family prominent in French horticulture. His cousin Auguste introduced the potato to France. His brother Joseph, also a horticulturist, served as superintendent of the city park and mayor of their hometown, near Brussels, in Belgium. His brother Andre emigrated in 1824 to New York where he worked as a reputable landscape designer, became superintendent of the Elgin Botanic Garden, and soon set up his own nursery business. In his nursery he grew 250 kinds of roses, no doubt many from his brother Louis. A man after my own heart, he advocated gardens laid out without “undue regard to symmetry,” gardens that would “re-instate Nature,” that is, be designed as less formal, more rustic.

But it was Louis Parmentier who, in his quiet and unobtrusive way, became renowned among the early rose breeders of Europe. During his lifetime he bred an astonishing 855 varieties of roses, of which at least 800 he kept to himself. According to Francois Joyaux, Parmentier did not begin his rose collection until some time between 1815 and 1820. If that is so, Parmentier was breeding an average of 28

different roses a year. Not the famed Descemet or the equally famous Vibert bred as many.

He was, wrote his botanist friend Louis van Houtte, an “indefatigable breeder.” Apparently because commerce was of little importance to him, Parmentier modestly grew most of his roses for private and personal pleasure. Their beauty was a joy and delight to him “which only his death enabled to be brought to the attention of the horticultural public.”

Upon his death, with the publication of a catalogue of his roses and the sale of his collection by his widow to botanists and rosarians, the horticultural world of the West became aware of one of the largest rose collections in all Europe. Indeed, it may have been the largest. It contained 12,000 roses, 3400 varieties, of which 855 varieties were his own originals.

Although he did not promote most of his collection, he did provide the Luxembourg Gardens under J. Alexandre Hardy with a few dozen varieties of his own roses. Furthermore, Louis van Houtte took it upon himself to introduce some of Louis Parmentier’s roses. When in 1846 van Houtte bought the rights to the Gallica ‘Tricolor de Flandre’ (still widely sold today), he introduced it “throughout the horticultural world” (see *Journal des Roses*, October 1881). It is very likely that he purchased it from the demure and self-effacing Parmentier.

Many of Parmentier’s roses contain the name d’Enghien as part of their nomenclature. So when Hardy in his 1837 and later catalogues provides the provenance of a rose as simply from Enghien, it is quite possibly a rose from Parmentier’s collection (‘Duchesse de Weimar’, ‘Belle Ludomille’, ‘Gustave Parmentier’, etc.).

Of his huge collection, at least fourteen of his personally bred roses are still with us 170 years later! About half of those are not well known in the United States, sold as they are by only one or two, maybe three, rose nurseries abroad. All Gallicas, these seven include ‘Moïse’, named for Moses, a crimson, purple, and mauve-grey



Prince Frederic



Hector



Van Artevelde

blend; ‘Prince Frédéric’, a fragrant, crimson—sometimes mauve—flower named for the national hero Frédéric de Merode who fought for Belgium’s independence and was killed in battle; ‘Hector’ (aka ‘Hector Parmentier’), named for the breeder’s nephew and godson, if not also for the hero of Troy, a lovely, thick, mauve rose, often mottled or marbled with pale purple; ‘Van Artevelde’, named for Jacob van Artevelde (1290-1345) who advocated for England’s Black Prince to be the Count of Flanders, a nearly “thornless” rose of deep pink; ‘Van Huyssum’, sometimes listed as a Damask, named for the Dutch floral painter and mislabeled at Sangerhausen’s rosarium, a red Gallica; and possibly ‘Victor Parmentier’, which may be a synonym for “Rose Victor”, carmine pink or even coral in the center, more lilac pink on the edges. ‘Dumortier’, a pinkish rose with pleated facial petals, named for parliamentarian and botanist Barthelemy

Charles Joseph Dumortier, who supported the 1830 Belgic Revolution, which created an independent Belgium, is still sold by the Loubert nursery in France and by Rogue Valley Roses in Oregon. The Gallica ‘Louise Méhul’ was still being sold by Bobbink & Atkins of New Jersey in 1935 but has since disappeared. Indeed, Parmentier contributed much to the production of Gallica roses.

More familiar of Parmentier's roses still in commerce are 'Belle Doria', a lilac and mauve Gallica flecked and striped with darker reddish shades, sometimes also with white; 'Belle Isis', an Agathe Gallica "ruffled dove-pink" according to Nancy Lindsay, an unusual and delicate color for a Gallica, with a button eye, named for the Egyptian goddess, wife and sister of Osiris, green goddess, grain goddess, corn goddess, the "beneficent queen of nature," as Frazer puts it in *The Golden Bough*; and 'Désirée Parmentier', a hybrid Centifolia or hybrid Gallica in strong pink or rose, slightly paler at the edges and very double, was named for his wife.



Belle Isis



Désirée Parmentier

We cannot overlook 'Narcisse de Salvandy', another Gallica introduced by van Houtte, a deep pink or wine-colored rose, yellow at the base, with every petal conspicuously edged broadly in white—much more so than the rose 'Baron Girod de l'Ain'. At the time of Parmentier's death, only two specimens of the rose were growing in his garden, both of which were sold, one bought by van Houtte. However, the rose sold today



Narcisse "de" Salvandy

under that name does not match the old description nor the colored engraving of 1850-51 found in Louis van Houtte's horticultural journal. Narcisse de Salvandy was a French pamphleteer and politician who fought under Louis XVIII and served in the Chamber of Deputies under King Louis Philippe.

The following three roses are perhaps the best known of all his flowers. The Gallica 'Hippolyte' is fairly common on the old rose market, bearing midnight purple, burgundy, or light violet double blossoms, depending on a

sunny or somewhat shady location. The fragrant petals surround a small knot. The plant, like most Gallicas, exhibits erect stems and canes, and, like a number of Parmentier's other roses, is nearly without prickles. Like some of his other roses ('Belle Isis', 'Hector', *e.g.*), this one may refer to a mythical character, an Amazon Queen. On the other hand, it was also a name somewhat popular among men in France during the 19th century. I



grow it surrounded by white roses where in late May it scintillates like a dark jewel.

The second rather familiar rose by Parmentier is 'Cardinal de Richelieu.' It is clearly a hybrid Gallica; for one thing, its leaflets are not sessile, a trait of pure Gallicas. Virtually without prickles, it shows the full erect form, however, of a typical Gallica. To Nancy Lindsay, this rose has "magical orbs of wine-dark amethyst lusted [sic] indigo and azure like a Blue Dove's breast." Her purple prose aside, 'Cardinal de Richelieu' is a very deep purple rose, vying with 'Hippolyte' in intensity. However, the 'Cardinal's' petals become quite pale, even white, at the



Cardinal de Richelieu

base, and the center petals generally curve inward, turning an almost shiny lilac.

In my old cemetery pilgrimages to Oregon for seven Junes now, I have often been asked to verify a certain old purplish rose as ‘Cardinal de Richelieu’, but most of the time it was not. True, it exhibited the form of a Gallica and displayed hybrid traits, but the flower was that of another. Perhaps it was that contemporary Dutch Gallica

of purplish carmine, now lost, listed in Hardy’s catalogues as simply ‘(Le) Cardinal’.

Cardinal de Richelieu (1585-1642), the man, clearly preferred the purple of royalty to the red of Catholicism. In love with power, he climbed to the rank of Bishop and eventually Cardinal in the Church and to Prime Minister in the state. Leading France with a harsh word and an iron hand, repression came to him easily. “Give me six lines written by an honest man” he once said, “and I will find something in them to hang him.” On the brighter side, like an antiquated dentist refusing to use anesthesia, he forcibly yanked France from its medievalism to make it the greatest European power of that time. Oh, and he was a great patron of the arts. I guess there is something good in everybody.

The third well-known rose bred by Parmentier is ‘Félicité Parmentier’, an Alba bred



Felicite Parmentier

before 1834 and still commonly sold. A soft pink at first, it ages to cream, bestowing its flowers in clusters of three to seven. The plant grows four or five feet tall, densely so, more than most other Albas. Somewhat prickly, it exudes a sweet scent—some say of honeysuckle—and prefers some shade. It is quite disease resistant. Unlike a number of other Albas, its genetic fingerprints indicate no *Rosa canina* in its origin, but like the others, it does reveal *R. gallica* in its hybrid status. For whom was it named? Not his wife Désirée but certainly for a member of the family.

Without doubt, other Parmentier roses grow in private and public gardens and are sold under names not given by or attributed to one of the greatest and most prolific breeders in rose history. The renowned breeder Vibert writes of the dishonest florists and nurserymen of his time in mid-19th century, those who passed off others' roses as their own or who renamed them in order to sell more of the same. Much the same is likely to have occurred with the hundreds of Parmentier's roses sold by his widow soon after his death. No later records we know of show his name attached to all the roses he bred. A single Moss named 'Parmentier' by Robert and/or Vibert, introduced in 1847, the year of his death, perhaps to honor this prolific breeder, may actually be Parmentier's own rose. But Vibert, we know, was conscientious of correct and proper attribution of roses.

One other rose was named 'Parmentier', a Hybrid Perpetual by Guillot fils in 1860. A garden shears, Secateurs Parmentier, also bore his name. The two roses still have a toe-hold in the market; I doubt that the secateurs does.

If we heritage rose lovers wish to identify old roses whose names have been lost, if we wish to honor this passionate rose breeder out of long-delayed gratitude, if we wish for variety in antique roses, we must attend to the surviving old roses in our midst. Louis Parmentier belongs in a triumvirate with Vibert and Descemet. Modest beyond recognition, he deserves our accolades and the preservation of his roses that remain.



THE GALLICA AS NORDIC ROSE

Darrell g.h. Schramm

The Gallica rose (also called The French Rose, the Provins Rose, and *Rosa provincialis*) has been in existence since at least early medieval times. At least. For Dioscorides mentions it in *De Materia Medica* in the first century. In 1825 at the height of its popularity, the Loddiges nursery in Hackney, England, boasted growing 2000 varieties of Gallica.

Generally of a dark red color--deep crimson, deep violet, purplish red, but also striped or mottled--the flowers are mostly semi-double or full, growing on bristly, upright canes about three feet high. While Gallicas grow best on their own roots, many are inclined to sucker. Hardy and undemanding, they do desire winter cold in order to bloom well.

Given Sweden's climate, hardy roses are a botanical necessity. And among the hardiest of roses are Albas, Spinosissimas, and Gallicas. Many Albas and Gallicas have been growing in Sweden since the mid-1600s. While *Rosa officinalis* ('Apothecary's Rose') and 'Rosa Mundi' are fairly common, at least forty other Gallica varieties are unidentified. The most commonly found mystery rose in Sweden is the

Gallica bearing the study name “The Zinnia Rose”, a rich rose-pink flower with somewhat purple petals on the fringe, rather frilly and jumbled, just barely teasing the eye with bright yellow stamens. But, as DNA studies have shown, it is a variable Gallica.



Another mystery Gallica found in about twenty Swedish gardens is called “Ullas Rose”. Its palest of pink, pleated petals seem to emerge from a tight button eye. The thickly full flower is both tidy and elegant.



Between 1850 and 1890, 250 varieties of Gallica were in commerce in Sweden. Today that number has diminished to 57, but that is substantially more than sold in the USA.

In Norway, a small team of rosarians have been collecting heritage roses for two decades throughout Norway and into the Arctic zone. Often the team collects suckers from the roses, then clones them for study. Many have been brought to Sweden’s genetic bank for study and analysis.

According to Danish nurseryman and author Torben Thim, around the year 1200 an abbot imported *R. officinalis* to Denmark from

France. The Danish masterpiece, the four volume *Gottorfer Codex* (1649-1659), contains illustrations of at least three Gallicas: *R. officinalis*, 'Rosa Mundi' and 'Tuscany'. Clearly, these roses have survived cold for centuries.

Sweden's Programme for Diversity of Cultivated Plants (POM) is a gene bank aiming to conserve and sustain a cultural diversity of plants, which, of course, includes roses. Since at least 2005, it has worked to inventory and document old Swedish garden roses, describing and attempting to identify the many unknowns. Its intention is to make the gene bank available to all for use in breeding new roses for cold climates, for restoration of period gardens, for cultural landscapes, for nurseries and the general public who may request—for a nominal fee—plant material to propagate. Modern shrubs, Hybrid Teas, Floribundas, and Polyanthas are scarce or non-existent in the gene bank, as are repeat-flowering roses. Most are species and their hybrids, Rugosas (such as the rare 'Kaiserin des Nordens'), Spinossissimas, Albas (the second most common rose found in Sweden), 'Centifolia Major', and Gallicas. The Gallica being so very popular in Scandinavia, we might well consider it the Nordic Rose.



'Sissinghurst Castle', a Gallica discovered under vines and rubble by Vita Sackville-West on her property in 1947. Also known as 'Rose des Maures', the rose does well on poor soil and tolerates neglect and shade. The flowers grow singly and in clusters of three to eight. They emit a very pleasant perfume.

SAVE THE ROSES

November 16-17: Annual **Save the Roses! Auction** at QLN Conference Center, 1938 Avenida del Oro, Oceanside, CA 92056.

California Coastal Rose Society

A series of power-point presentations to be given by well-known rosarians:

- **Ping Lim** - Hybridizer at Altman Plants; Roses by Ping
- **John Bagnasco** - CCRS President, author, hybridizer, ARS Rosarian and President Garden America
- **Gregg Lowery** - world renowned rosarian and curator of The Friends of Vintage Roses
- **Jill Perry** - curator of the San Jose Heritage Rose Garden
- **Robert Martin Jr.** - Author, hybridizer, ARS Master Rosarian and ARS President

Speakers will spend about 45-50 minutes describing plants offered in the SILENT AUCTION. Bids may be placed from noon Saturday the 16th to noon Sunday, November 17.

The LIVE AUCTION begins at 1:30 PM on Sunday and ends by 3:30 PM. Internet bidding is possible, and shipping charges are paid by the winning bidders. For those living in inclement weather areas, CCRS members will over-winter your plants at no extra charge while awaiting a spring 2020 shipment.

We will **also** offer "Dinner with the Speakers" at the Green Dragon Tavern on Saturday, November 16 at 5:30 PM. Separate checks will be available. Dining is limited to 20 people.

For those who require lodging, reduced rates will be offered at the Carlsbad by the Sea Resort, located about 8 miles from the Auction site via freeways. You may make alternate room reservations, of course.



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