



Notes from the Veterans Memorial Rose Garden



MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY™
EXTENSION

Old Garden Roses

The Veterans Memorial Rose Garden (VMRG), located at the R. R. Foil Plant Science Research Center at Mississippi State University, displays a wide variety of roses. Among these roses are cultivars that represent classes of roses developed before 1867, when the first hybrid tea rose was introduced. Many of these old garden roses may be found at old homestead or cemetery sites throughout Mississippi; they may not be readily available at local garden centers.

The best roses grow well with little attention or need for spraying. Most of these roses have plant habits that blend well into informal landscapes. They may or may not be susceptible to blackspot or other common rose diseases, but they persist well or they would not be present in old, untended gardens.

The old garden roses at the VMRG were selected for their reputed ability to tolerate poor soils and a subtropical climate. Our goal is to find roses that will thrive in Mississippi under average growing and maintenance conditions. All of these roses are available from mail-order nurseries that specialize in preserving old varieties.

Multiple classes of old garden roses grow in Mississippi, but many varieties should be considered short-lived due to Mississippi's climate. Our summers are hot and humid, and winters are cool and wet. These conditions are challenging for many roses, especially those developed for cool climates. Classes of roses found in the VMRG that developed in northern Europe, Japan, Korea, or mountainous habitats include moss, damask, portland, alba, and hybrid rugosa roses.

Other classes of old garden roses are derived from species originating in warmer climates ranging from southern Europe to the Middle East to southern China. Many of these varieties grow well in the southeastern United States. Classes of roses from warm climates represented in the VMRG include hybrid musk, China, bourbon, noisette, tea, hybrid perpetual, and species roses.

Rose breeding is a complex and ancient practice and has created a great diversity of form and performance. Old garden roses are different in landscape appearance, use, and perspective compared to modern roses. Those that are proven performers in Mississippi are worth including in our gardens.

VMRG Roses Originally from Cool Climates

(such as northern Europe, Japan, Korea, or mountainous habitats)

Moss roses can be found in historical records as early as the 17th century. These roses have so many prickles that they look fuzzy or mossy. The prickles may be stiff and sharp, or they may be soft, downy, and glandular in texture. Many plant parts are endowed with these mossy prickles, including buds, sepals, hips, stems, and leaves. Flowers are usually semi-double to fully double. Plant size ranges from miniatures to large shrubs of at least 6 feet. Many moss roses are spring-blooming only, but some bloom repeatedly.

Many **damask roses** originated in Persian gardens and were most likely brought to Europe by returning Crusaders. These roses may grow to a height of 5 feet and have a loose, open growth habit, but characteristics can be highly variable. Leaves are typically gray-green and downy with a soft texture; shoots are very thorny. The blooms are usually highly fragrant with a damask scent. Ancient damask roses are spring-blooming only, with the exception of the 'Autumn Damask' rose ('Quatre Saisons', *Rosa damascena bifera*), which repeats.



'Henri Martin' is a selection to look for. The prickles are small and may be soft and mossy or sharp, like bristles. This spring-blooming rose has a large and spreading growth habit, and is wild in appearance when left unpruned.



'Kazanlik' (*Rosa damascena trigintipetala*) is a very ancient cultivar from the Middle East (Bulgaria, India, Persia, Turkey) and is used in the manufacture of perfumes. This spring-blooming shrub has some shade tolerance. It is a large, sprawling, wild-looking tangle of growth with numerous, grabbing thorns if left unpruned.

Portland roses are of an unknown origin, but they have many characteristics common to damask and gallica roses and, presumably, of China roses (described on page 6) because of their smaller height and repeat bloom. Portland roses of known dates range from the late 18th through the 19th centuries. They resemble damask roses with rough-textured leaves that cluster around short-stemmed blooms. Shrubs are compact with an upright growth habit. Blooms have an old rose form with a strong damask fragrance.

Alba roses are ancient roses grown in England during the Middle Ages. The robust shrubs grow to 6 feet or more. Foliage is typically a soft, matte gray-green. These roses bloom in the spring with delicate pastel blooms.



'Rose de Rescht' is an undated rose that will suit small garden spaces well and that is known to have some shade tolerance.

'Madame Plantier' is a spring-blooming rose with some shade tolerance. Growth is very vigorous, and adequate space for full growth is highly recommended. It makes an excellent dense screening shrub. The canes are long and flexible with few thorns, making it trainable to fences or pillars. However, this would require strict diligence to keep the growth under control.

Hybrid rugosa roses are a late old garden rose development derived from hybridization of rugosa roses with other garden roses. Rugosa species and varieties are from Japan, Korea, and northern China, and possess good cold hardiness. Hybrid rugosa roses resemble rugosa roses, but display flower colors and other traits common to the non-rugosa parent. The roses are shrubby with stout thorns. The leaves are apple green with rough leaf surfaces and distinctly patterned venation. Flowers are large, usually blooming repeatedly and often followed by attractive hips in the fall.



'Dr. Eckener' is a large shrub with an open, coarse branching structure with coarse foliage and vicious thorns. It does not serve well as a screening shrub, but it does bloom with repeat cycles, and the blooms are very large and fragrant. It has some shade tolerance.

VMRG Roses Originally from Warm Climates

(such as in southern Europe, the Middle East, or the Far East)

Hybrid musk roses technically evolved later than the first hybrid tea rose, but they have so much in common with old garden roses that they are at times classified as old garden or classic roses. Many of these roses were bred by Joseph Pemberton in England in the early 20th century and share lineage with polyantha and noisette roses. They are a very early stage in the development of modern shrub roses. Hybrid musk roses may grow to 6 feet in height with a shrubby and graceful growth habit. Flowers are small to medium in size and arranged in sprays. They bloom repeatedly under good growing conditions.



'Buff Beauty' is a large, vigorous shrub that has a spreading growth habit and long, arching canes. In the VMRG, this rose elegantly drapes against the ornamental fence. The bloom cycle is almost continuous, and the flowers are an interesting buff to apricot color. It has some shade tolerance.



'Pax' was introduced at the end of World War I, and its history and name (Latin word for peace) make this rose an appropriate choice for our garden. Its growth habit and growing requirements are similar to 'Buff Beauty', but with a little more open growth. Bloom is fairly continuous with semi-double white flowers.

China roses are a very important class in the evolution of modern roses. The earliest roses, brought to Europe by colonial traders, were important to collectors and breeders because they flowered repeatedly. These early varieties were crossed with European roses to increase the flowering season, among other desirable characteristics. These crosses have created a great diversity among modern roses. China roses are shrubs with airy, twiggy stems, sparse foliage, and few thorns. Foliage and stems may be reddish when young, providing extra color interest. The leaves are smooth, elongated, and pointed. Flowers are small but numerous, and the repeated bloom means the plants are seldom without flowers during the growing season. These plants grow larger in warm climates and can achieve a size of 6 feet or more in our area. China roses appreciate locations that are shielded from wind, but they are otherwise hardy. Their growth habit mixes well with other landscape elements. Provide plenty of space in the garden for these roses so they will not have to be pruned hard, but merely trimmed to maintain shape and remove dead or aging growth.



Climbing ‘Cécile Brünner’ is a sport of ‘Cecile Brünner’ (the “sweetheart rose”). It is a very large and robust climber that requires a stout arbor for support. This cultivar is a spring-only bloomer, but it features highly abundant blooms of small flowers. The slightly shade-tolerant foliage is healthy, abundant, and fills out early enough to partially obscure blooms.



‘Comtesse du Cayla’ is useful for small garden spaces. Bloom is continuous, and the flowers are almost single and fragrant.



'Cramoisi Supérieur' is a compact, tidy shrub that is a small-sized screening shrub in the VMRG. Bloom is continuous with non-fragrant, semi-double flowers arranged in large clusters.



Rosa chinensis mutabilis ('Mutabilis', butterfly rose) is an ancient garden hybrid that serves well as a medium to large screening rose. The abundant, healthy foliage and twiggy growth make this a good landscape rose. Bloom is continuous the entire season with abundant single, non-fragrant flowers. Bloom color intensifies with age, instead of fading.

Bourbon roses developed from a chance seedling of the 'Autumn Damask' rose and 'Old Blush', an early China rose, on the Île de Bourbon in the Indian Ocean. The resulting cultivars have a mixture of characteristics from both roses that preserve the flower form of the damask roses and foliar appearance of the China roses. This group of roses is considered a step toward the familiar form of modern rose classes.



'Kronprinzessin Viktoria' is a graceful, small shrub suitable for small garden spaces or for containers. The bloom is continuous with fragrant flowers. The pale-colored flowers are known to discolor in wet weather, but this has not been a noticeable problem in the VMRG.



'Louise Odier' is a large rose with long, arching canes in an open growth habit. It is known to have some shade tolerance. The highly double, fragrant flowers are arranged in dense clusters along the canes.

Noisette roses developed in the early 1800s in Charleston, South Carolina. They arose from a crossing between a China rose and a musk rose to form repeat-flowering climbers. These roses are a little tender and appreciate our mild southeastern climate. The growth habit is relaxed and elegant, and the flowers are of old rose character, delicate and usually fragrant. Bloom is continuous during the season.



'Céline Forestier' has long, arching canes that can be trained to a pillar or fence. Bloom is continuous with highly double flowers.

Tea roses are an important parental rose line used in the development of the hybrid tea. These roses are thought to be descended from a cross between *R. gigantea* and *R. chinensis* by Chinese breeding efforts. Early cultivars arrived in Europe via plant collectors in the early 1800s. Roses were probably shipped back by the East India Company that imported tea from China. It is conjectured that sailors on the trading ships called them "tea-scented roses," and thus, the name evolved. Some rosarians claim the blooms have a tea-like fragrance. They tend to be less cold-hardy than many classes of roses, but they are hardy in the southeastern United States. The growth habit is more slender than hybrid tea roses and retains the graceful, twiggy form of China roses. They are repeat bloomers. Flower form can be diverse, but elongated, refined, high-centered buds distinguish many cultivars. These buds became popular with Victorians to wear in buttonholes.



'Duchesse de Brabant' is suitable for smaller garden spaces, with a graceful spreading growth habit and abundant foliage. Bloom is continuous with highly double, cupped flowers. This rose needs a warm, sunny location to thrive.

Hybrid perpetual roses were developed because breeders wanted to produce flowers of great beauty for display in flower shows that were popular at the time. Genetic lineage became quite complicated, and breeding for growth habit was secondary to bloom form.



'Ferdinand Pichard' is a large shrub with arching canes. Its unpruned growth habit is rather untidy. Bloom repeats in cycles with flowers that are white and red striped, cupped, and fragrant.

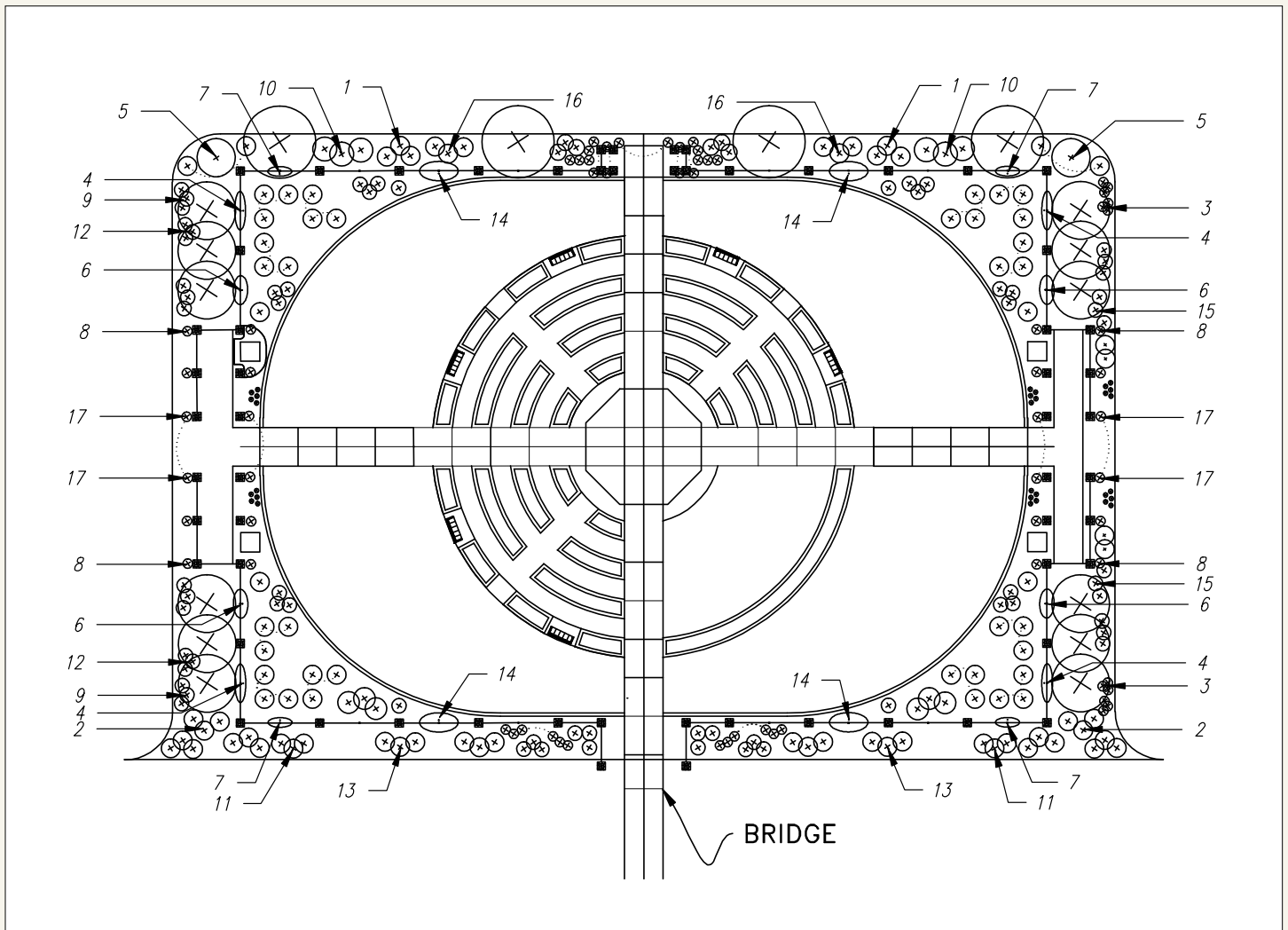
Finally, there are **species roses** that have become well-known landscape plants in their own right. *Rosa banksiae lutea* is a species rose form of unknown ancient garden origin brought to the southeastern United States from China in the early 1800s. It has flourished in areas with mild climate. *Rosa banksiae* has yellow or white, double- or single-blooming forms, but the one most often seen in Mississippi is the double yellow form, called 'Lady Banks' rose ('Yellow Banksia' or *R. banksiae lutea*). This very large climber has a light, airy, and elegant growth habit and few thorns. The leaves are small, semi-evergreen, and very healthy.



'Lady Banks' rose is the first rose to bloom each spring. It blooms only once per year, but the mass of small, yellow double blooms stops traffic with its massive display.

Old Garden Roses Grown at the Veterans Memorial Rose Garden

Cultivar	Class	Location
'Henri Martin'	Moss	NE, NW outside perimeter beds
'Kazanlik'	Damask	SE, SW outside perimeter beds
'Rose de Rescht'	Portland	NE, SE outside perimeter beds
'Madame Plantier'	Alba	NE, SE, NW, SW inside perimeter beds
'Dr. Eckener'	Hybrid Rugosa	NE, NW outside perimeter beds
'Buff Beauty'	Hybrid Musk	NE, SE, NW, SW inside perimeter beds
'Pax'	Hybrid Musk	NE, SE, NW, SW inside perimeter beds
Climbing 'Cécile Brünner'	China	NE, SE, NW, SW outside beds on arbors
'Comtesse du Cayla'	China	NW, SW outside perimeter beds
'Cramoisi Supérieur'	China	NE, NW outside perimeter beds
'Mutabilis'	China	SE, SW outside perimeter beds
'Kronprinzessin Viktoria'	Bourbon	NW, SW outside perimeter beds
'Louise Odier'	Bourbon	SE, SW outside perimeter beds
'Céline Forestier'	Noisette	NE, SE, NW, SW inside perimeter beds
'Duchesse de Brabant'	Tea	NE, SE outside perimeter beds
'Ferdinand Pichard'	Hybrid Perpetual	NE, NW outside perimeter beds
<i>Rosa banksiae lutea</i>	Species, form	NE, SE, NW, SW outside beds on arbors



Legend

- | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. 'Henri Martin' | 10. 'Cramoisi Supérieur' |
| 2. 'Kazanlik' | 11. 'Mutabilis' |
| 3. 'Rose de Rescht' | 12. 'Kronprinzessin Viktoria' |
| 4. 'Madame Plantier' | 13. 'Louise Odier' |
| 5. 'Dr. Eckener' | 14. 'Céline Forestier' |
| 6. 'Buff Beauty' | 15. 'Duchesse de Brabant' |
| 7. 'Pax' | 16. 'Ferdinand Pichard' |
| 8. Climbing 'Cécile Brunner' | 17. <i>Rosa banksiae lutea</i> |
| 9. 'Comtesse du Cayla' | |

Mail-order Sources of Old Garden Roses

Angel Gardens

21299 Old Bellamy Road, Alachua, FL 32616 | 352-359-1133 | gardenangel22@gmail.com
angelgardens.com

Chamblee's Rose Nursery

16807 CR 363 Winona, TX 75792 | 903-882-5153
chambleerose.com

Heirloom Roses

800-820-0465, 503-538-1576 | info@heirloomroses.com | heirloomroses.com

High Country Roses

800-552-2082 | highcountryroses.com

Petals from the Past

16034 County Road 29, Jemison, AL 35085 | 205-646-0069 | petalsfromthepast.com

Rogue Valley Roses

2368 Terri Drive, Medford, OR 97504 | 541-535-1307 | info@roguevalleyroses.com
roguevalleyroses.com

Rose Fire, Ltd.

09394 State Route 34, Edon, OH 43518 | 419-388-8511
rosefire.com

Rose Petals Nursery

16918 SW 15th Avenue, Newberry, FL 32669 | 352-215-6399 | roses@rosepetalsnursery.com
rosepetalsnursery.com

Roses Unlimited

363 North Deerwood Drive, Laurens, SC 29360 | 864-682-7673 | rosesunlmt@gmail.com
rosesunlimitedsc.com

The Antique Rose Emporium

9300 Lueckemeyer Road, Brenham, TX 77833 | 800-441-0002 | roses@wearerose.com
antiqueroseemporium.com

References

- ▶ Austin, David. 1992. *Old Roses and English Roses*. Antique Collectors' Club, Ltd. Woodbridge: Suffolk.
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- ▶ Beales, Peter. 1992. *Roses*. Henry Holt and Company, Inc. New York: New York.

For More Information

See *Old Garden Roses* in the video series *Gardening through the Seasons*, located at <http://extension.msstate.edu/extension-stories/video/2017/old-garden-roses>.





Photos by Pamela Collins recorded at the Veterans Memorial Rose Garden.

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