

## Old Garden Roses and the ARS Rose Show

### Article & Photos By Dona Martin

First organized on August 17, 1892 as a society of leading greenhouse rose growers, the American Rose Society, from the beginning, had as one of its principal purposes "to establish and encourage rose exhibitions throughout the country." In 1916, the Society reached a major turning point with the publication of the first American Rose Annual under the editorship of J. Horace McFarland, and the redirection of the society to one of amateur rose hobbyists. Still, a principal purpose of the society was to promote rose shows, now directed toward the amateur. For example, in the 1917 American Rose Annual, Dr. McFarland wrote:

"It is now desired to suggest the holding of many shows in which may be exhibited during the June rose month the best flowers amateurs can produce."

Dr. McFarland then went on to call upon local organization and groups to hold local rose shows, offering the support of the American Rose Society for details and medals. The provision of such details is illustrated in the ARS Member's Handbook for 1920, which in addition to announcing for the first time the appointment of a committee of Consulting Rosarians, published a model show schedule, as well as rules and premium propositions for the conduct of local rose shows.

From the beginning, American Rose Society amateur rose shows featured not only the modern roses of the times, but older roses.

For example, in 1919 the Executive Committee of the ARS first released illustrative schedules for the exhibitions of garden roses by amateurs. Section A of the suggested schedule (Fig. 1) included prizes not only for the best exhibit of the then modern hybrid teas and hybrid perpetuals, but also for hybrid rugosas, noisettes, moss roses and the best exhibit of "Old-fashioned Roses (Mosses excluded.)"

Today, more than 90 years later, old roses continue to be a feature of rose shows operated under ARS standards. In particular, ARS certificates are available for the Dowager Queen award, given to the best blue-ribbon winning Old Garden Rose variety introduced prior to 1867, including any rose whose exact year of introduction is unknown, but which is known to have been in existence prior to 1867. A separate Genesis Award certificate is available for species roses; in the absence of that class, species roses are eligible for the Dowager Queen award. The Victorian Rose award certificate is awarded to the best blue-ribbon winning Old Garden Rose introduced in 1867 or later, whose date of introduction, though after 1867, is unknown. Other shows provide classes for multiple OGR blooms, collections, and in a few cases, set aside a separate class for certain classes of OGRs.

I pause here to comment on the term "old" as applied to these roses. In 1966, the American Rose Society defined "old garden roses" as those classification types that existed prior to 1867, the year of the introduction of the putative first hybrid tea, 'La France'. It also adopted the generic abbreviation in rose references for these classes of roses as

"OGR". Neither the abbreviation nor the term have settled well over the years with growers of old roses, for reasons I think best stated by Brent Dickerson in *The Old Rose Advisor*: "I am not overly fond of the word "old" as applied to these roses. It suggests an arcanum that unfortunately alienates. I have known people who wrinkle up their noses and say "old rose", as if we were talking about an old sheep or an old sandwich."

Although Brent's observation is both amusing and to the point, he still, thereafter, continued to use the term "old" in his works. I suspect he did so because he, like I, is not confident that referring to such roses as "heritage" roses is any improvement. "Old" is a term that signifies that something has aged a comparatively long time, which can well be a positive comment on its virtue. And, since OGR is at least "official" and has an accepted meaning, I am content with its use.

Returning then to the subject, national and district shows also feature challenge classes for OGRs. On the national level, there are two challenge classes, the **Joseph J. Kern Trophy, right**, first offered in 1973 for the best collection of five old garden roses, each a different variety, in separate containers, and the **Dorothy C. Stemler Memorial Trophy, below right**, first offered in 1977 for the best bouquet of eight or more blooms or sprays of old garden roses. Both are offered at the spring national convention.

In addition, six of the ARS districts feature challenge classes that include old garden roses. These include the Rachel Smith District Memorial Award offered in the Carolina

District for an entry of five OGR blooms; the Francis & George Johnston Old Garden Rose Bouquet in the Deep South District for an old fashioned bouquet of seven to twelve OGRs and/or shrubs; the Claudius Mayo Memorial Award in the Gulf District for three OGR specimens, blooms and/or sprays; the Floyd W. Johnson Trophy in the North Central District for eight stems of OGRs or shrubs; the Lee Allen Memorial Trophy in the Pacific Northwest District for five stems of different varieties of OGRs; and the Los Angeles Rose Society Challenge Bowl in the Pacific Southwest District for a bouquet of OGRs, six to nine stems, three or more varieties. Several districts also have challenge classes that permit the use of a combination of roses of different classes, including OGRs.

The vibrancy and diversity of the OGR classes in ARS shows can be seen from statistics of the winning varieties. In the last ten years there have been



3,715 reported winners of the Dowager, Genesis and Victorian Awards, presented to an astonishing 376 different varieties. Of these, 212 different rose varieties have received the Dowager or Genesis award, while 164 have received the Victorian Award.

Leading the Dowager and Genesis awards is *Baronne Prévost*, an 1842 Hybrid Perpetual, followed closely by the botanical curiosity, *Green Rose*, also known as *Rosa chinensis viridiflora*. In third place, we find the 1843 Bourbon, *Souv de la Malmaison*, followed by **Marchesa Boccella, top**, another 1842 Hybrid Perpetual. These are followed by five species roses, *r. rugosa rubra*, *r. gallica officinalis* (The Apothecary Rose), *r. gallica versicolor* (*Rosa Mundi*), **r. rugosa alba, center**, and *r. rugosa*. The remainder of the top 12 includes the 1851 Bourbon, *Louise Odier*, the 1843 Portland, *Yolande d'Aragon* and the always beautiful, pure white **Mme Hardy, below right**, a Damask from 1832.

The Victorian Award list is dominated by *Rose de Rescht*, an 1880 Portland that has led the class every year and has accumulated more trophies than the next four roses put together. It is followed by the 1869 Hybrid Perpetual, *Paul Neyron*, also in a class by itself in second place. In third we find the 1928 China, *Pink Pet*, the 1868 Bourbon climber, *Zéphirine Drouhin*, *Mme Isaac Pereire*, another Bourbon from 1881, and the very fragrant 1894 Tea, *Francis Dubreuil*.

An examination of the winning exhibitors for the 2010 ARS certificates discloses that the OGR classes attract a wide variety of exhibitors, including, as may be expected,

collectors and well-known OGR aficionados.



For example, noted author Peter Schneider and his wife Susan recorded seven winning entries, including relatively unknown varieties as *Caroline de Sansal*, *Robert Duncan*, *Pink Surprise*, *r. arkansana* *Peppermint*, *Mons de*

Morand and Souv du Président Lincoln. Bill Patterson, co-proprietor of Rose Unlimited Nursery, recorded three trophies, while Cliff Orent, the proprietor of Euro-Desert Roses, recorded five, including awards to such unusual varieties as Hippolyte Jamain, Oskar Kordel and Géant des Batailles. The most trophies for the year were recorded by Harold White of Durham, North Carolina, with nine. Andy Plasz, winner of a record ten national OGR trophies, also recorded six OGR trophies in 2010, while award-winning photographer Tom Mayhew added four.

The winning exhibitors in 2010 also included top ARS officers and directors, led by ARS President Jeff Wyckoff and his wife Kathy, long-time proponents of OGRs, who recorded four trophies, including awards for Mme de la Roche-Lambert, Old Red Moss and Gallica Macrantha. Bruce Monroe, National Chairman of Judges added two awards, while Susan Clingenpeel, the previous National Chairman, had one for the year. Other winning exhibitors included ARS Treasurer, Diane Sommers, Region 8 Director Carol Macon, Buckeye District Director, Elton Smith, Colonial District Director, John Fleek, PNW Director, Jack Kiley, PenJersey Director, Kevin Glaes and Yankee Director, Oz Osborne.

Perhaps surprisingly, some of the best-known exhibitors of modern roses are also well represented in the ranks of the winning OGR exhibitors. Dr. Satish Prabhu and his wife Vijaya, who rank #1 all-time in the number of national trophies won, were the winners of both the Kern and the Stemler National trophies at the spring ARS national in Shreveport, as well as both the Dowager and

Victorian Award. Other well-known exhibitors of modern roses that scored multiple OGR awards in 2010 included Richard Anthony & Kristine Vance of Kent, Ohio, with four; Bob & Kitty Belendez of Santa Clarita, California with five; Ron & Modine Gregory of Temecula, California with four; Don & Brenda Johnson of Sapulpa, Oklahoma with five; and Gary and Monica Rankin of Lavalette, West Virginia with four.

Dona and I have long enjoyed growing and showing old garden roses, both before and since our marriage. On a combined basis, we have won the Dowager Queen award on 35 occasions and the Victorian 31 times. Dona also won the Dowager Queen at the 2000 ARS Spring National in Houston with Baronne Prévost, while I had previously won the Victorian Award at the 1991 Spring National in San Jose with Nastarana.

Although our Dowager and Victorian winners include many of the usual suspects, we have also delighted in winning with a number of less common roses. Our Dowager winners have included the 1826 painted Damask, Leda; the old Gallica, Enfante de France; the China, Archduke Charles; the 1876 Alba, Belle Amour; the 1851 Bourbon, Mlle Blanche Lafitte; and the 1835 Bourbon, General Allard. Our Victorian winners have included the blush 1876 Alba, Pompon Blanc Parfait; the 1891 copper-colored tea **Monsieur Tillier (next page)**; and the 1901 China, L'Ouche.

Dona is particularly gifted in making bouquets of old garden roses, a common feature of which is her "signature" rose, the dusty purple gallica, Cardinal de Richelieu. In 2000, at the

Houston Spring National, Dona won the Stemmler trophy with a magnificent bouquet of Adam, Autumn Damask, Baronne Prévost, **Cardinal de Richelieu**, Celine Forestier, Charles de Mills, Enfant de France, Honorine de Brabant, La Reine Victoria, **Leda** and Mme Driout. More recently, while we were living in Arizona, we won the Scottsdale Challenge on five consecutive occasions with large bouquets of shrubs and old garden roses staged by Dona.



Dona and I moved in 2010 to a new house in Escondido, California where we have established a new rose garden that now contains about 40 varieties of OGRs.



**Cardinal de Richelieu, above  
Left, Mons Tillier, below left,  
Leda**

In 1924, J. H. Nicolas authored an article in the ARS Member’s Handbook, titled “Why Have Amateur Rose Shows?” His answer was that the “main object in arranging a show for amateurs is, first, to give them encouragement to grow better and more roses” and “to educate them how to do it by exhibiting the accomplishments of other amateurs.” Those objectives are as valid today as then, and a rose show that includes classes for old garden roses serves both to encourage rosarians to grow old garden roses and to educate them on how to do it well.

The determination of what roses are “better” roses is an essential part of both the encouragement and educational aspect of a rose show. This requires an evaluation of the entries by knowledgeable rosarians against a set standard of perfection, a process known as “judging”, but which can as easily be called “appreciation.” The availability of such a

process encourages would be exhibitors to bring specimens for evaluation and educates both the exhibitor and the visitor on how the specimen compares with what the rose can be. It is only through this process that the full measure of the beauty of the rose may be seen and appreciated.

Alternatives to rose shows are occasionally advanced, typically styled as non-judged shows or, in the case of old garden roses, sometimes as "celebrations". It is of course good to celebrate the beauty of old garden roses, but celebrations that consist only of examples of motley blooms on spindly stems displayed in mason jars cannot and do not do justice to these beautiful roses!

Standards, by definition, need to be agreed upon as do the qualifications of individuals to act as judges and instructors. To this end the American Rose Society has published its Guidelines for Judging Roses and maintains an active program to accredit qualified rose judges. Both the Guidelines and the judging program provide resources for the evaluation of old garden roses, supplemented from time to time by seminars, articles, programs and other resources. This is another area where the American Rose Society has since its beginning acted as a central source of support for the growers of old garden roses.

The 1920 ARS Member's Handbook observed that, "Nothing is more enjoyable and nothing more stimulating to the growth of real rose interest than these comparative exhibitions, aimed particularly to develop rose growing though recognition of even one single fine bloom by an exhibitor, plucked on the

morning of the exhibition by a man or woman who only has one bush." That is a wonderful sentiment that is as true today as it was then. It is also one that continues to apply well to those beautiful garden roses that we have come to know as "old". ~



**Scottsdale OGR Collection**



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