



By Any Other Name

FROM THE LADY BANKS TO THE HOI-TONG-HONG, ROSE NAMES ARE AS VARIED AS THEIR COLORS AND AS CAPTIVATING AS THE STORIES BEHIND THEM

WRITTEN BY AMY ROBINSON

PHOTOGRAPHY BY TKTKTKKT KTKTKTKT



It began as a weekend project. Bill and Rhonda Spilman would drive up from Sunrise to their 10 acres in Fellsmere to get back to nature. “I told the man doing some grading for us to clear a spot behind the house for a rose garden.” Rhonda smiles at the memory. “He looked at me like I was crazy and declared there was no way roses would grow in this dirt.” She set out to prove him wrong.

Spilman began as most gardening enthusiasts do, buying from big box stores and spraying, pruning and fussing over temperamental roses that looked their best the day they came home. She soon realized this was not how she wanted to spend her time and began extensive research, frequenting libraries and seminars to learn everything she could about roses still on their original root, before hybridization and grafting altered the destiny and growing habits of the celebrated flower. “I learned that the old roses were hardier and better equipped to handle our hot summers,” she recalls. “I spent hours on the internet researching information and purchasing from Vintage Roses in California and Roses Unlimited in South Carolina. These were very special places with old growth roses they had nurtured for years.”

The Spilman’s secret garden known as Country Care Roses is tucked away off of two dirt roads a few miles from downtown Fellsmere. My car’s GPS gets me within a quarter mile and gives up. I find the long driveway and keep pace with the neighbors’ dogs racing down the fence line and turn into Country Care Roses, where the fruits of Spilman’s labor fill my senses. Rose bushes in neat rows mound, climb and drift in every direction overtaking bowers, trellises and spreading along the ground. Bees dive deep into flowers and lift off slowly like tiny dirigibles laden with their pollen cargo. “The first thing we did was plant nectar and host plants for bees and butterflies and trees that produce fruit and berries for birds. The balance of nature is a big part of the success of these roses.”

Instead of a retail operation, Spilman has opted to keep Country Care Roses as an educational effort. She is a retired teacher, after all, and uses her knowledge to help others establish gardens that enhance the natural surroundings. Garden



Evisquos, ocribus, caecepere tus, nononsu pesis. Em maximus.



Evisquos, ocribus, caecepere tus, nononsu pesis. Em maximus. Avervir ibuncenatur in traed diem conesciente hacte, num peripio, Pala quam re mo is in sedet fectudeme et, noste vivit; none et; neque fure, contrum

clubs from surrounding areas visit in the spring, and Spilman will go off site to present a history of the rose at master gardener programs. “Roses are divided into three groups: species (wild roses), old garden roses and modern roses,” Spilman notes. “All roses can be traced back to the original species rose found growing naturally in their habitats, just like orchids. Old garden roses have been grown in cemeteries, old homesteads and on the side of the road without attendance,” she states.

Old garden roses are defined as those dated pre-1867 when hybridizing began in France and can be divided into the

following two main groups: the European group (Gallicas, Albas, Damasks, Portlands, Mosses, Centifolias) and Mediterranean group (Chinas, Teas, Noisettes, Bourbons). The roses grown at Country Care contain examples of the Mediterranean group. Spilman refers to all roses with the pronoun “she,” giving them an identity apart from just plant life. “Roses like the Louis Philippe (1834), Mutabilis (1894) and the Napoleon (1835) belong to the China classification and are truly easy care. They will grow in their natural state and you won’t have to do anything special to care for them.”



Evisquos, ocribus, caepercere
tus, nononsu pesis. Em maximus.
Avervir ibuncenatur in traed diem
conesciente hacte, num peripio,

Joséphine de Beauharnais was almost solely responsible for the popularity of the rose in France. When her husband, Napoleon Bonaparte, was off on his Italian campaign, she purchased Château de Malmaison outside of Paris in 1799 with money they scarcely had. Once he recovered from his initial anger, Napoleon helped her restore the place and build large heated greenhouses for the exotic plants she loved. Joséphine's rose collection was to become the greatest in the world, unsurpassed until the creation of Sangerhausen in Germany and L'Hay outside Paris one century later. To aid Joséphine's cause, the French navy was enlisted to confiscate any plants or rose seeds from ships at sea to send to Malmaison and make sure her large purchases from the British nurseries were permitted safe passage through the naval blockade. Joséphine commissioned the famous flower artist Pierre-Joseph Redouté to paint her roses, and his work was published in a lavish book released after her death. Since then, *Redouté's Roses* has never been out of print.

Many roses have a story behind them that adds to their appeal among cultivators. One example is the Lady Banks rose.



Evisquos, ocribus, caepercere
tus, nononsu pesis. Em maximus.
Avervir ibuncenatur in traed diem
conesciente hacte.



Evisquos, ocribus, caepercere tus, nononsu
pesis. Em maximus. Avervir ibuncenatur in traed
diem conesciente hacte, num peripio, Pala
quam re re mo is in sedet fec/ntrum



Native to China, the rose was brought to the United States from Scotland by Mary Gee in 1885. She married a miner and settled in Tombstone, Arizona, where the rose was planted and eventually forgotten. Despite the extreme desert climate, the original bush is still there today and its branches cover more than 8,000 square feet held up on cable wire. Another storied rose is the Katrina rose, which grew in Peggy Martin's lavish old-rose garden boasting 450 distinct plants in Phoenix, Louisiana. Their fragrance, she said, reminded her of her grandmother's garden, and she freely shared cuttings with friends and neighbors. Hurricane Katrina soaked Plaquemines Parish with saltwater that rose over 20 feet and covered everything for more than two weeks. Once allowed back to her home three weeks later, Peggy was astonished to discover one rose in particular dripping with muck but still thriving as if the hurricane had merely been a breezy day.



As I make my way through her garden, Spilman points to a massive climbing rose bush that looks so tall and thickly domed that I thought it must be attached to a giant half-moon shaped trellis or geodesic structure, but when I peek in to the underside of the plant, which resembles the runner and ribs of an umbrella, I see it is the plant alone that bears not only the considerable weight of its leaves and blooms but that of scores of chattering birds protected under its huge canopy.

"That's the Macartney rose, a tea rose native to China," says Spilman. "Tea roses were so named because they were originally shipped in boxes of tea from China to help preserve them, and they would smell like tea for a week after they were unpacked."

Maintaining good soil is a large part of her garden's success.

"We had truckloads of dirt brought in and built raised beds. We put in well-drained compost and installed a drip system to conserve water. Bill constructed trellises to encourage the climbers," she added. "Mulch is great for roses. I like using oak leaves, bark, and a little Canadian peat. The key to growing a healthy rose is giving them the nutrients they need in the soil. They can't take up enough nutrients in our sandy soil alone."

Spilman believes that avoiding some of the hybrids that are known to suffer from aphid infestations helps keep the rest of the plants healthy. As I stop to check my camera, she instantly crouches and begins weeding, which seems like an automatic gesture for her, similar to that of brushing hair out of one's face. "Weeding is constant, but if I keep up with it on a daily basis, I can stay ahead of it. Just like vacuuming daily when there is a shedding dog in the house."

It is impossible to stump her when pointing out a plant in the garden. "That's a Drift rose," she says, when I point to a low-growing rose that resembles a ground cover and acts in the same way, rooting anew from the various places on the stems that drape along the ground. I bend to inhale a tightly-scrolled pink rose open to the sun. "Spice rose from Bermuda," she says. "Those are called Bermuda Mystery Roses because no one knows how they got there. Some believe seeds or cuttings spilled from ships and made their way to the island." Another classic-looking rose is named Mr. Lincoln. "Everybody knows a Mr. Lincoln. It's the iconic red rose." A softly blushing rose is named Puerto Rico. "That's a found rose," she explains. "That means it is unknown how or exactly where they originated."

Most of the roses are named for the people that grew them





Evisquos, ocibus, caepercere tus, nonosu
 pesis. Em maximus. Avvir ibuncenatur in traed
 diem conesciente hacte, num peripio, Pala
 quam re re mo is in sedet fecNtrum

Other roses are named for their specific features, such as the Chesnut rose, brought to Europe from China around 1820, also known as the Hoi-tong-hong.

or made them famous, or for the places from which they came. The Mrs. B.R. Cant Tea rose originates from 1901 from the garden of famed rose grower Benjamin Cant. A rose named for the Duchesse de Brabant dates from 1857 and later became a fragrant fixture on President Teddy Roosevelt's lapel after a state visit. The Pope John Paul II is luminous white and considered one of the finest, most fragrant white roses of all time. Other roses are named for their specific features, such as the Chestnut rose, brought to Europe from China around 1820, also known as the Hoi-tong-hong. This unique rose has both hips (the fruit of the rose) and buds that closely resemble the horse chestnut.

For Rhonda and Bill Spilman, who now live on the property full-time in a large log home built by the former owner, the garden's blend of old roses complimented by some modern rose descendants give the couple a sense of tranquility. "Every day we experience the calmness and peace of the garden. As the garden grows and changes through the years so too will we."

THE LANGUAGE OF ROSES

OLD GROWTH ROSES: those in their original state, grown before 1867 when roses began to be hybridized in France.

SPECIES ROSES: just like orchids, these are the originals that grew wild and normally have four to five single petals without scrolling.

SCROLLING: the multi-layered effect of petals in the bloom, which open tightly and as the bloom ages, reveal each layer of petals.

HYBRID ROSES: created by mixing seeds of different roses in tight groupings to encourage the roots of each to grow together and make a new rose.

GRAFTING: the act of taking a scion (cutting) from one plant and tightly attaching it to the root stock of another to quickly grow a new plant.

ROSE HIPS: the bulb-shaped fruit of the rose including the seeds that develops after the flower drops off.

OWN-ROOT ROSES: those that grow more slowly on their roots alone and are propagated by a cutting rather than by grafting. ☼