

# Centifolias

Centifolias were perhaps the first class of roses to be developed as a group of hybrid cultivars as far back as the late seventeenth century. They continued their popularity through the heyday of rose breeding in the early 19th century, possibly because of their splendid fragrance and charming floral form. These “hundred-petaled” roses with their globular flowers of fine petal texture gained the nickname early on of “Cabbage roses,” a name later loosely applied to many other very double roses, like the Hybrid Perpetuals.

Little is truly understood of this ancient group of roses. Professor Arthur Tucker suggests that Centifolia and Damask roses both figure in Roman paintings and perhaps even earlier. Cultivars and names abound in the modern nursery trade with little or no provenance. Brent Dickerson’s work on the subject demonstrates how 200 years ago new names were being bestowed on old forms of Centifolia as with *Des Peintres*.

## Habit

Arching growers to 6’ or more with a mix of fine and coarse prickles, large rounded foliage, usually neatly serrate at the edges, Centifolias have an informal draping habit of growth. We distinguish two general types.

1. (E.g., CENTIFOLIA MAJOR) The common Centifolia.
2. (E.g., SPONG) The dwarf Centifolia, which is denser, more upright, more compact.



### BLANCHEFLEUR

C o/ffff/1 Vibert, 1835 [Pickering]

White tinted blush; beautifully formed. This is among the more coveted roses I know, as those who love white flowers are always asking for it. Its habit is more broad and sprawling than most Centifolias, and seems part Gallica.

### BULLATA

[*Rosa centifolia* ‘BULLATA,’ LETTUCE-LEAVED ROSE]

C o/fff/1 Dupont, 1809 [Pickering]

The LETTUCE-LEAVED ROSE is more than an oddity, though its large puffed and crumpled foliage touches the beholder first. Flowers of typical Centifolia charm, fragile of petal and sweetly scented, are lovely in bud with their feathery sepals.

### CABBAGE ROSE

[CENTIFOLIA, *Rosa centifolia*]

C o/ffff/1 unknown, 1596 [Pickering]

Very fragrant cupped flowers, at first swirled, then reflexed in a variety of shapes, all charming. Medium to light pink. Cherished for centuries for its fragrance and beauty. Those who remember old “Cabbage roses” from their grandmothers’ gardens should look at the group called Hybrid Perpetuals.

CENTIFOLIA MAJOR (see DUTCH PROVENCE)

CENTIFOLIA VARIEGATA (see DOMÉTIL BÉCAR)

COCARDE PALE—*Missing from our collection.*

### CRISTATA

[CENTIFOLIA CRISTATA, CHAPEAU DE NAPOLEON, CRESTED MOSS]

C o/fff/1 Vibert, 1827 [Pickering]

Flowers of a classic Centifolia color and form, but for the leafy proliferations of the sepals, which make a handsome crown around the unfurling petals. One of the most popular Centifolias grown today; this rose has proven somewhat slow to develop on its own roots, but is worth your patience.

### DES PEINTRES\*

[CENTIFOLIA MAJOR, DUTCH PROVENCE?]

C -/fff/1 unknown, pre-1800 [Pickering]

This typical old Centifolia is very much akin to CENTIFOLIA MAJOR or the CABBAGE ROSE, but its flowers, foliage, stems, and habit are bigger and stronger. Very full, very deeply cupped blooms of sweet perfume in a clear deep, rose pink.

This name appears around 1806 applied to a rose from Holland that was considered an old favorite at that time.

## DOMÉTIL BÉCAR

[VILLAGE MAID, CENTIFOLIA VARIEGATA]

C o/fff/1 unknown, 1845? [Hortico]  
White to palest blush flowers are delicately striped and flaked with palest pink; from a distance the effect is of a Centifolia with lilac-white flowers. After some years of study, we grow convinced that DOMÉTIL BÉCAR is the oldest name applied to this rose.

## DUTCH PROVENCE

[GRAND CENTEFEUILLE DE HOLLANDE, CENTIFOLIA MAJOR]

C o/fff/1 unknown, pre-1848 [Huntington]  
“Flowers rose, very large and full; form globular. Closely resembles the COMMON PROVENCE,” according to William Paul in *The Rose Garden* of 1848. We wonder how indeed it did vary from the CABBAGE ROSE, for close comparisons turn up little evidence that these are two roses, though the DUTCH PROVENCE does seem to have somewhat larger flowers, a difference that culture could account for.

## GASPARD MONGE

C o/ffff/1 Robert, 1854 [SJHRG]

Large, globular, lilac-pink flowers shaded silvery-grey, very fragrant, with many delicate petals that can be ruined by wet weather. Probably a Hybrid China as its stems are very smooth for a Centifolia.

## HYPACIA

[HYPATHIA]

C (G) o/ff/1 Hardy, pre-1844 [Worl; l’Hay]

Cupped broad flowers of cherry pink spotted pale blush — very effective! We had classed this previously under Gallicas, where we knew it was wrongly placed; Dickerson classes this as a Centifolia, based on early listings.

(Note: This rare variety has been lost to us, and we would be very grateful to anyone who might be able to provide us with cuttings. We keep this listing here in the hope that we will again be able to provide this to you.)

“LA NOBLESSE” (see Hybrid Chinas)

## LAURA

C o/fff/1 unknown, pre-1836 [Huntington]

From James Sagmiller’s mother’s garden comes this old treasure (i.d., Huntington). Full cupped flowers of deep rosy pink, large and freshly scented, drape heavily from a low spreading shrub.

## LE RIRE NIAIS

[À ODEUR DE PUNAISE]

C? o/(ffff)/1 Dupont, pre-1810 [SJHRG]

Proof that humor exists in the world of roses; this unassuming, rather pretty Centifolia with mid-pink flowers is strongly scented, and not in the most pleasing way. Known in French as the “Stinkbug Rose,” its name translates roughly as “The Silly

Laugh,” presumably a reference to the surprise and mirth it engenders in those who unwittingly sample its perfume.

## LIPPOLDSBURG, TYPKASSEL

[Rosa centifolia ‘Lippoldsburg’]

C rr/fff/1 unknown, unknown [Schultheis]  
We can find nothing in the literature about this rose, but were told of it by several Americans, including Miriam Wilkins, who saw it on a tour of German rose gardens. It is very close to those old Centifolias we know well, a pleasing shade of pink and sweetly scented. Its importance rests in its ability to rebloom, which I have observed now over two summers. It reliable and produces flushes of flower along with the late summer growth spurts. Lost to us in 2001, this reappeared recently from Germany under the name TYPKASSEL.

## PETITE DE HOLLANDE

C o/fff/2 unknown, c. 1800 [Pickering]

Smaller in every respect than the common Centifolias, yet not miniature like ROSE DE MEAUX and SPONG. Flowers are soft, almost blush pink, with deeper shades at the center. A great choice for the small garden where a true Centifolia is wanted.

“PETITE LISETTE” (see Damasks)

ROBERT LE DIABLE (see Gallicas)

## ROSE DE MEAUX

C o/ff/1 unknown, 1789 [Huntington]

One of the small group of miniature Centifolias still recommended by William Paul in the 1840s. Tiny foliage, dainty clear pink buttons, tiny petals; to 4' tall.

## SPONG

C o/ff/2 Spong, 1805 [unknown]

In between ROSE DE MEAUX and PETITE DE HOLLANDE in size of flowers, foliage and habit, this dwarf Centifolia is superb for the smaller garden. It should be in more breeding programs to infuse fragrance into modern miniature roses, as well.

TYPKASSEL (see LIPPOLDSBURG)

## UNIQUE BLANCHE

C o/fff/1 Richmond/Grimwood, 1777

[Schultheis]

Pure white flowers with one petal usually touched pink; buds rounded, opening dahlia-like with an incurved center around a green eye. First collected in the 18th century!

VIERGE DE CLERY—*Missing from our collection.*

VIRGINALE—*Missing from our collection.*

## WHITE DE MEAUX

[POMPON BLANC?]

C o/ff/1 unknown, pre-1824 [SJHRG]

The white sport of the famous dwarf old rose, ROSE DE MEAUX is identical to its parent in every way except the color, which is pure white, only rarely even tinted with pink.