

A Second Chance

Sue Bunte

About 30 years ago I decided since nobody had ever promised me a rose garden, I would plant one myself. And I did. At the end I had 90+ plants, but over a period of several years I lost all but 16. Six years of drought and a very healthy population of gophers can devastate a rose garden in no time at all. Most of the survivors were old roses, so when I decided a few years ago to start over again, I sought out nurseries who specialize in vintage roses, discovered TfoVR and showed up at the garden the day they were cutting flowers for the Celebration of Old Roses. Of course I had an ulterior motive. I was “shopping” for varieties I couldn’t live without and hoping to be able to purchase some of them the next day at the Celebration. My plan was to help with the cutting, buy plants the next day, and go on about my business. It didn’t quite work out that way. I ended up joining TfoVR, and I made an almost weekly trip to the garden to help with maintenance of the plants.

Last Spring I agreed to become the curator of the Floribunda Collection



'Sheila MacQueen' (photo by S. Bunte)



*'Bedont' (above); 'International Herald Tribune' (top right); 'Rodhatte' (bottom right)
(photos by S. Bunte)*

and began the process of moving 281 plants to my property in Napa. We have since shared about 50 duplicate plants with the California Coastal Rose Society for their permanent collection and are actively trying to replace the varieties that have been lost to gophers and drought. Pamela and Mike Temple have shared cuttings from their collection, and we now have 'Rodhatte' (Little Red Ridinghood). 'Jillian McGredy', 'Gracie Allen' and 'Mazurka' back



in the collection. With our reciprocal agreement to share cuttings and plants with the San Jose Historic Rose Garden, we were able to obtain cuttings of 75 varieties several weeks ago, most of which have now taken root. I have also purchased young plants from Greenmantle and Burlington Rose Nursery this year. Those plants are thriving, some have bloomed already, and since I'm not familiar with all of the varieties and photos never do them justice, it's been like Christmas.

Admittedly when I agreed to bring the Floribunda Collection home and care for them, I didn't think it through very well. The area

where I put the pots was very uneven and needed some serious work to get it prepared. It didn't take long for weeds to take over between the pots, for pots to fall over because of unlevel ground, so I moved the whole collection to another area and let the goats in to clean out the weeds.

To save myself a lot of work, I called my neighbor who has a backhoe and asked him to come down to fix my problem. He donated about two hours of backhoe work and scraped the area. I now have a nice flat weed-free plot to return the plants to. Next week chips will arrive and I will cover the area with wood chips to help keep the weeds down.

I love my Flori's. The range of colors and blossom types is simply amazing. And then there is 'Shelia McQueen'. If you don't like the color when she first blooms, wait a day or two. She starts out pink, turns yellow and then turns green before she fades away. I was stunned the first time she bloomed as I watched the process.

The Floribundas are so easy even I can keep them going. I have started using mycorrhizae on the roots when I repot and Dr Earth's Rose and Flower Food for regular feeding. It seems to be working. The plants are doing great and making me smile a lot! It has been one of the most rewarding undertakings I have been involved with, not just the Flori's, but helping to save this amazing collection. The older I get the more appreciative I become of things that have stood the test of time. Some of the roses in the TFoVR collection can't be found anywhere else in the country, and some are so rare they can't be found anywhere in the world. If this collection is lost, that may very well be the end of many of these roses, and that would be a tragedy. Last year when we were hit by wild fires, it became horribly clear just how fragile the existence of the TFoVR collection is. "Fostering" them and sharing cuttings and plants with other dedicated individuals and organizations is an excellent method of insuring these wonderful plants continue. ■



'President Herbert Hoover' (photo by D. Nauman)

The Pernetianas

Daniel Nauman

The Vintage Roses Collection of Pernetianas has been relocated to Red Bluff, California—just a couple hundred feet from the Sacramento River. Our large front lawn was already doomed due to years of neglect before we bought the property and to an infestation of Dallas grass—not to mention that I already have about a quarter acre of riverside lawn that requires twice weekly mowing in the summer. Gregg Lowery got wind of the impending lawn removal