THE *Vintage rose*

Spring 2022, Issue 28

THE FRIENDS OF VINTAGE ROSES

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NEWSLETTER FOR THE FRIENDS OF VINTAGE ROSES
Spring 2022, Issue 28

IN THIS ISSUE:

A Rose in Scented Silk

The rose sits alongside my driveway where, as I emerge from my car, . . . *see page 3*

Gardening Out of Time

I knew I wanted to retire to Eugene, Oregon, from my experiences during visits to my daughter. . . . *see page 5*

An Ecologist's Garden of Old Roses

Roses have long had a reputation as being fussy, "heavy feeders" demanding tons of chemical intervention. . . . *see page 9*

Curator's Report

Without taking much of a breather, The Friends of Vintage Roses has been quite busy. . . . *see page 14*

Firebird Suite of Roses

She didn't know that she was beautiful. She knew only three things: that she was inflamed with a fire for life, . . . *see page 15*

On the cover: 'Clementina Carbonieri' (photo by Elaine Sedlack)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

A Rose in Scented Silk: 'Mme. Gabriel Luizet' 3

Gardening Out of Time 5

An Ecologist's Garden of Old Roses 9

Curator's Report: A Time Capsule of Roses 14

Firebird Suite of Roses 15

FROM THE EDITOR

In a dire time of drought and climate change, we continue to offer you an Eden of roses, a carnival of roses, even a firebird suite of roses. In times of stress and distress, the human heart longs for serenity and beauty. We hope you find a little of that here. Elaine Sedlack pushes our admiration and our envy buttons in showing us the lushness of growing roses in Oregon's Willamette Valley. Debbie Petersen shows us the ecology of growing roses in a hot and dry California region. By the time you have finished reading this issue, we trust you will feel informed and entertained, as well as inspired to continue your support for The Friends of Vintage Roses.

'Mme. Gabriel Luizet' (photo by Darrell Schramm)

A Rose in Scented Silk

Darrell g.h. Schramm

The rose sits alongside my driveway where, as I emerge from my car, I need take but a few steps to dip my face into its wonderful scent. Its silvery pink petals, silky smooth and reflexed, form large, cupped flowers on upright canes bearing mostly small straight prickles. The nearly Kelly green leaves with much paler undersides exhibit five

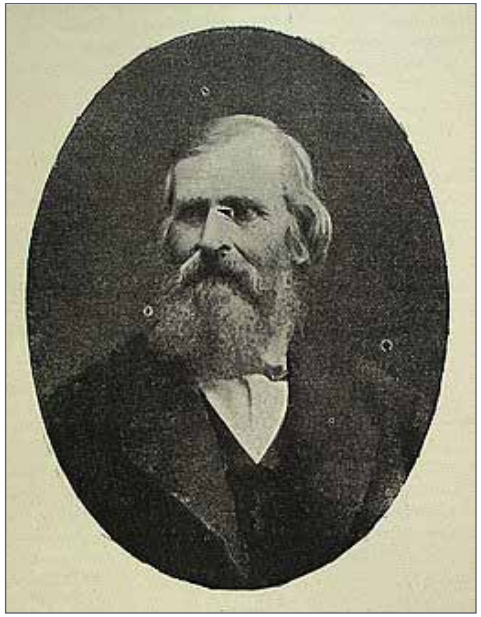
serrate, ovate-acuminate leaflets whose petiole and entire stem as well as the petiolules are lined with minute, stiff hairs. The same is true for the edges of the adnate stipule. Likewise, the pedicels, which bear foliaceous buds, display minute bristles. The plant will grow four to five feet high. Unless carefully pruned long and fertilized after its first flush, it is not inclined to rebloom. The rose is 'Mme Gabriel Luizet'.

It is a rose that the iconoclast of formal gardens William Robinson mentions again and again, clearly one of his favorite roses in the last decade of the 19th century. In fact, he thought it "the sweetest of all Hybrid Perpetuals." He advocates growing several at once in a group, planting them two feet apart.

'Mme Gabriel Luizet', a Bourbon sometimes considered a Hybrid Perpetual—as Robinson did—was raised by Jean-Pierre Liabaud in 1877. Two well-known and still extant roses bred by Liabaud are 'Baron de Bonstetten', and 'Monsieur Boncenne'. (The two are not, as has been claimed, the same rose, though, no doubt, they may have been confused for each other.) Lesser known are Liabaud's roses 'Jeanne Masson', 'Mme Alphonse Seux', and 'Mlle Marie Magat', all Hybrid Perpetuals. For more than forty years he produced mostly Hybrid Perpetuals but, seeing the drift of fashion, during his last ten years created mostly Tea roses.

Liabaud (1814–1904) was a horticulturist and rosarian who bred 128 different roses. A self-made man, he was orphaned at age twelve where he learned some of his skills by living with a well respected agronomist for about five years. He then apprenticed himself as a gardener and eventually became head gardener at Chateau de Montmelas. In 1846 he moved to Lyon, bought a nursery, and began breeding roses. He retired in 1896 and died at age 90 in 1904.

'Mme Gabriel Luizet' was named for the wife of a nurseryman whose specialty was budding fruit trees, a procedure he popularized. From his father Marc Antoine, renowned in Lyon, he learned the pruning and grafting of trees but further guided himself through observation and personal studies of nature. He viewed horticulture more as an art than as a science. Passionate about horticulture and living in the city of silk and roses, Gabriel Luizet (1794–1872), also cultivated roses.



Jean-Pierre Liabaud

One would have liked to know more about Mme Luizet. Perhaps, residing in the silk capital of France, and perhaps like the refined petals of her namesake, she wore primarily gowns of charmeuse silk, sometimes ornamented with roses, both artificial—of satin—and real. I think Robert Herrick would forgive my parody of his poem:

Whenas in silks this Madame goes,
the liquifaction of her clothes
resembles that of her namesake rose. ■

Gardening out of Time

Elaine Sedlack

I knew I wanted to retire to Eugene, Oregon, from my experiences during visits to my daughter. One of the main attractions was all of the OGRs that I saw growing all over town, but there was a limit to how many times I could ask my daughter to stop the car to look at roses. At least, in her mind there was. I would travel by train, and then return home with my grandsons in tow. Altogether, I probably took over 25 trips on AMTRAK's Coast Starlight. After my gardening mentor retired here, I would divide my visits between my daughter's family and to see my friend, Harlean Richardson. Ultimately, by a somewhat comical process, Harlean sold me her house. Her age was presenting challenges to her ability to maintain her garden, but she wanted to be able to visit her plants. She moved to a nearby retirement community, and we would get together every week for lunch and a garden tour of all her favorite rhododendrons and maples, checking on each plant's progress. For a few idyllic years we enjoyed each other's company over leisurely visits. We had known each other and been friends for 50 years. While she was living, I didn't make any major changes to the garden.

Our shared passion was for Japanese maples. Harlean was not an aficionado of roses, though she liked them. Our visits were focused on the maples, intense 'seminars of two', fueled by Zinfandel. We would cover the dining table with maple books and spend most of our time plotting where we could fit another, and after making a decision we would go nursery shopping, usually to Greer's. I would often be sharing my southbound train compartment with a maple. Once, I brought her a tree on the train from Berkeley, one she couldn't find here. Of course, this particular tree likely started life in Oregon and then was shipped to California. I simply brought it home. I never thought that the garden with all these trees would be mine someday.

The Willamette Valley is horticultural heaven. There is a very wide range of plants that do well here, providing you can provide

left: the author with Harlean's sister; right: 'Etoile de Hallande', Climbing Hybrid Tea (all photos by E. Sedlack)

top: 'Safrano'; center: 'Clementina Carbonieri; above: 'Lamarque'

drainage. Eugene is situated on wetlands; in the winter I need a rowboat to venture into the garden! The soil is heavy and rich, with considerable clay, which many roses actually like, so that's not a problem.

There were only two roses in the garden when Harlean lived here: 'Fragrant Cloud' and 'Anne Harkness'. At the time I purchased the house, I still had a couple years to work before I could retire. So I would come every few months to check on things and stay a few days to pull weeds. I knew that I needed to bring my roses here, especially ones that were no longer commercially available that I had obtained from Vintage and Pickering. I figured roses are so tough that they would survive without care until my return visits, provided I watered them in well, and planted them in the fall and winter. Over those two years, altogether I transported 60 roses, on airplanes now, in the interest of time. Since then, I have managed to fit in another 20. The garden is also still home to Japanese maples, camellias, azaleas and rhododendrons. Overfilled. I guess I am a collector.

I would wash all the soil off the roots, remove all the leaves (I was concerned about possibly bringing diseases with me), and cut off the tops to a few inches, and stuff them in my suitcase. I lost only one, a small cutting grown plant of 'Crimson Glory'. Once I came on Christmas Eve, and the temperatures were in the low 30's. I had to wait for the hose water to thaw. There had been a heavy snowstorm that November, unusual for Eugene. I didn't make it back until March, and within that period it had snowed again. One rose I had planted was 'Mme. Ernst Calvat'. I remember when I packed her that I hadn't wanted to remove her foliage, since she had just made some beautiful new growth. Upon my return, I was so surprised to see that not only had she not lost those tender young leaves, but in the interval she had also grown a new shoot. I think this speaks to the toughness of the Bourbons. Generally, roses here do not begin blooming until late May, but they begin breaking into growth in March.

Among my favorite roses are the Teas and Tea-Noisettes. It has been interesting to see how they do here. I was worried that I wouldn't be able to keep them. They are definitely not happy with the long winter season. They pretend that warmer days are coming, and start into growth whenever there is a warming trend, but then their buds, which would be able to open properly in California, ultimately freeze and fall off. But I am surprised at their general hardiness, despite the prolonged cold spells. 'General Schablikine' almost never stops growing and blooming. He is up to the eaves of the house, and I do prune him a lot, just to make it possible to walk by. 'Safrano' and 'Clementina Carbonieri' are equally undaunted. 'Catherine Mermet' suffers during very extreme cold periods, but is still with me. 'Lamarque' is amazing. My neighbor had built an arbor over his walk on our shared boundary, and he allowed me to

plant the General there. I can't keep up with this rose! I have to keep an eye on him before he takes to the neighbor's roof. I prune him three times a year. What I notice is that the Teas and Tea-Noisettes don't bloom as continuously here as in California. I think the main problem for them is that even when daytime temperatures are conducive, the nights are still often cold, in the mid 40's even in the summer. They get homesick for the Riviera. That said, 'Lamarque' is productive in spite of this drawback. The Tea-Noisettes growing in our Heritage Rose Group members' gardens that do well here are 'William Allen Richardson', 'Jaune Desprez' (the same parentage as 'Lamarque'), and 'Allister Stella Gray'. There are some sizable plants of 'Mme. Alfred Carriere' growing around town. My 'Reve d'Or', though, is a failure in terms of repeat bloom. I have given her the warmest corner of my garden, but she really only blooms once or twice. Maybe with time she will have the resources to produce more.

A couple of years ago, Cindy Wise, a Eugene Heritage Rose Group member, made arrangements with Gregg Lowery to drive to Sebastopol to get a large number of roses that he was donating, to be planted at the Eugene Pioneer Cemetery. Mainly these were Gallicas, and they are thriving. They have no problem with the cold; in fact they require it. The nice thing about planting Gallicas at the cemetery is that they can run within each plot, but most of the plots have cement curbs which contain them. If they do escape, they are fair game to pot up for sales. At home I have a couple of Gallicas, 'La Belle Sultane' and 'Tuscany Superb'.

'Monsieur Boncenne' is my unhealthiest rose, but I would never part with him. I also have a few other cultivars which sucker. These are relegated to the parking strip. 'Duchesse du Rohan', a Damask Perpetual, is densely growing and spreads slowly. The same is true for 'Velours Episcopale', a Hybrid China, though the latter is a very arching, large growing plant. I whack at it—and let it encroach upon 'Iceberg' until the fall when I cut it back. These provide a screen from the street, a rose hedge, along with 'Fantin La-Tour', and 'Felicite Parmentier'. Further over are the Tea rose 'Mme. Antoine Rébé', and 'Comtesse du Cayla',

left: 'Reve d'Or'; top right: 'Monsieur Boncenne'; above: 'Duchesse de Rohan'

above: 'Kronprincessin Viktoria von Preussen'; center: 'General Schablikine'; below right: 'Souvenir du President Carnot'

a China. The Comtesse presents visibility issues when I back out of my driveway, but periodically I take a pair of hedge shears to her.

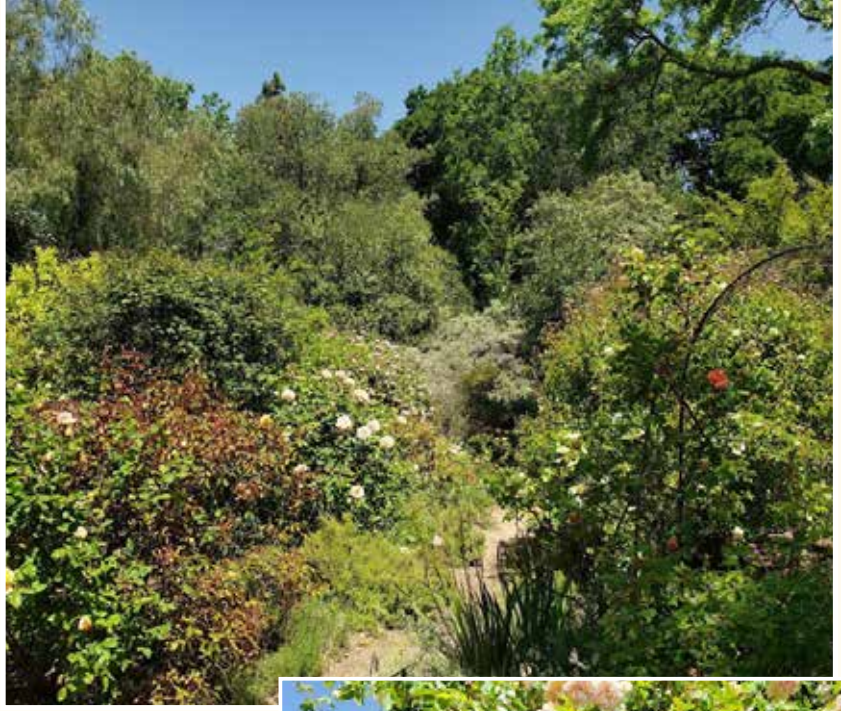
All my roses are in the ground except for 'Kronprinzessen Viktoria von Preussen'. She sulks a little, but I take special care to feed and thin her to help her adjust. She is one of the lower growing Bourbons. At the Owen Rose Garden the Bourbon 'Boule de Neige' is climbing robustly into a magnolia. It's almost 20' tall. That rose loves Oregon. I put mine against the house, but I won't keep her there, she is always hitting her head on the eaves. The Tea rose 'General Schablikine' is another very vigorous grower. My plant came as a cutting from a woman I knew through my work. She had taken a Botanical Garden tour to Italian gardens and admired this rose growing as a climber in the incredible garden of Ninfa. She asked the gardener for cuttings, and, after carefully nurturing them, produced young plants to share with many of the staff and volunteers. This reminds me of the time I brought cuttings of a rose home from a public park in Rome, only to find when it bloomed that was 'Harison's Yellow', the yellow rose of Texas. Roses are such successful peregrinators, and we willingly enable them.

I have many climbing roses growing on my fence lines: 'Etoile de Hollande', 'Baltimore Belle', 'Isphahan', 'Phyllis Bide', the climbing form of 'Crimson Glory', 'Mons. Paul Lédé', and 'Aimee Vibert'. This last one is making her way unassisted up an Italian cypress. Next to 'Lamarque' on the neighbor's arbor I have a young 'Crepuscule'. This is another of the Tea-Noisettes that does well here. She is two years old and already sending out 10' canes. I should have planted 'Moonlight' with her, just for poetry's sake, but it is growing along the side of another of my three Italian cypresses. The Hybrid Musks are reliable in most parts of the country, and Oregon is no exception. I have 'Danae' climbing through a full moon maple, while 'Buff Beauty' is arching into an English oak. 'Kathleen' is sidling up to the small red-leaved maple, 'Beni Otaki', the one which I had brought on the train; it's 20' tall now. A recently planted climbing HT, 'Mme. Driout', obtained from a fortuitously arranged buying expedition to the Friends of

'Monsieur Paul Lédé'

Vintage Roses sale, will engulf a snowball viburnum, with 'Ballerina' at her feet.

Last spring, my friend Harlean's sister contacted me from Washington State, and tentatively broached the idea of spreading Harlean's ashes in the garden, her last garden, which she hadn't wanted to leave. She thought I might not be comfortable with the idea, but I was wholeheartedly in favor. Last June, she and I spread small scoopfuls of ashes under all her favorite rhododendrons and maples, ones that were likely to survive us all; I didn't want to have to remove any soil if a plant were to die. Now, when I look at the garden, I feel her here with me, and this spring, when the rhododendrons bloom, it will be as though Harlean is saying hello, her spirit manifesting in flowers. ■



above: Livermore Eden; right: 'Juane Deprez' (all photos by J. Harland unless otherwise noted)

An Ecologist's Garden of Old Roses

Joan Harland

Roses have long had a reputation as being fussy, "heavy feeders" demanding tons of chemical intervention. Only recently has the idea of a sustainable rose garden taken hold, renewing interest in Old Roses—survivors of diseases and insect pests long before the use of chemical fertilizers, fungicides, and pesticides.

Debbie Petersen (photo by Greg Harland); right: 'Mme. Alfred Carriere' on pergola

Debbie Petersen has spent a career as a habitat restoration ecologist, and her garden in Livermore, CA is an eye-opening example of what sustainable practices can do for roses. Mostly invisible from the street, her rose garden is a private paradise, a third of an acre of cooling wilderness in an otherwise flat and hot terrain.

On the HelpMeFind website, Debbie describes her "Catspa's Livermore Garden" as a "residential garden teeming with cats (domestic, stray, feral, and an occasional mountain lion) and birds. Major plant groups of interest: California native plants, blackberry varieties, fruit trees, old roses, South African flora, yuccas, Opuntia cacti, thymes, evening primroses, species iris—yes, it's a bit chaotic." One senses that while the roses are important to Debbie, the other inhabitants are equally important.

I first came last April just to see Debbie's 'Jaune Desprez', a towering Tea-Noisette from the same family as 'Lamarque', but Debbie, warm and welcoming, kindly let me stay for hours, transfixed by the garden itself.

This last week I revisited the garden. 'Jaune Desprez' still ascends twenty-plus feet through a laurel tree on the west side of the property, masses of pale apricot blossoms shedding pineapple scent down towards me, next to a massive thirty-foot 'Mme Alfred Carrière' climbing a pepper tree. As we come through the side gate on the west of the house, Debbie comments on the swarms

of orange butterflies (Gulf fritillaria) visiting a wall of 'Golden Celebration' and laying their eggs on a nearby passion flower vine. If the Garden of Eden had a rose section, this would be it.

Debbie tells me that she took her time building the garden. Beginning twenty years ago, she spent two years in demolition, removing a lawn, hot tub, and unwanted trees and shrubs before installing fences and newly planting. It "just sort of happened, piecemeal, based on my varied interests as a plant/restoration ecologist, a lover of roses trying to experience and make space for as many of those as possible." She did most of the physical work herself, getting help from her husband when she needed carpentry skills or tall ladders. The large valley oak was "a practically invisible, suppressed tree about four feet tall" when they first moved in,

far left: 'Golden Celebration'; left: "Vina Banks"; below: "Portland from Glendora"

but it subsequently "exploded" when a redwood, liquid amber, and birches around it were removed. The back hill was previously covered by "painfully bright purple ice plant" which she removed, but she left a few toyons, grevillea, and some rosemary "as a start for a sort of 'multicultural' chaparral." The east hill, now with the Hybrid Musk 'Felicia,' the found Hybrid Banksia "Vina Banks" with arching white sprays, and the orange Tea-Noisette 'Crépuscule,' was "completely covered by English ivy, with a row of large, scale-ridden white oleander bushes along the fence, and the ugliest Deodar cedar I have ever seen." Near the house, an existing orange tree has been left to grow twenty feet high and wide.

When Vintage Gardens was open, she drove up there often to buy roses for her new garden. One major criterion for her was scent. Some roses she finds especially fragrant are "Portland from Glendora" (a found Damask Perpetual rose from Vintage Gardens), 'Jaune Desprez,' and 'Madame Isaac Pereire.' "For me, a rose has to be pretty darned unique or spectacular to get away with having little or no scent." One of her exceptions is "Zalud House Shingled Raspberry" (possibly 'Clara Barton'), a found rose from Vintage Gardens with large, full cerise flowers, often with an orange tint at the base.

Most of Debbie's roses are found only gradually by following circuitous dirt paths. The roses are tall (hard to find one under six feet), almost *muscular*. Debbie laughs at several varieties described in catalogs as "compact," which in her hands have reached six to eight feet. It's an eclectic rose collection, resulting from Debbie's singular taste and the test of time. Some of the more unusual varieties include the out-of-commerce 'Poulsen's Yellow' (the first yellow Floribunda), the red-blend shrub 'Kathrinerl,' the Hybrid Teas 'J. Otto Thilow' and "Marlowe's Soft Orange," and the white shrub "Merete Stenbock" found in Italy. (For a list of Debbie's rose varieties, see "Deborah Petersen" under "HMF Members," on the HelpMeFind website.) As we reach each rose, Debbie comments on the behavior of the wildlife, trees, and companion plants sharing its space. One of her favorite companion plants is the low-growing plum tart iris (*Iris graminea*), named for its plummy scent and grown from seed. Another is the 'Hairy

left: 'Mme. Isaac Pereire'; right: "Zalud House Shingled Raspberry"

Canary Clover" (*Dorycnium hirsutum*), an easy-care groundcover with gray-green foliage.

Nearly all of the Old Rose groups are represented here (Damask, Portland, Bourbon, Alba, Musk, Moss, China, Hybrid China,Tea, Noisette, Wichurana), as well as out-of-commerce Hybrid Teas, Floribundas, and Miniatures. Among the oldest roses are 'Autumn Damask,' 'Rose du Roi,' 'Old Blush,' the white 'Aimée Vibert' and 'Jeanne d'Arc' (Vibert, 1818), and 'Ispahan'. But the roses she loves and plants the most are the floriferous Teas. For her, one of the greatest Teas is the pale yellow 'Le Pactole' (like 'Jaune Desprez' a relative of the Tea-Noisette 'Lamarque').

Debbie's current favorites are those sporting apricot or yellow blooms with a fruity fragrance: 'Apricot Glow,' 'Lemon Spice', and 'Gruss an Coburg.' She adds that there is only one grafted rose she's ever grown: 'Just Joey,' another apricot rose with outstanding scent. But there's always another rose on her wish list. Today, it's 'Lavender Pinocchio.'

Still, even for a very experienced gardener (52 years), not all roses can grow here, and the ones seen today are the survivors of many

top: 'Katherinerl'; above: 'Marlowe Soft Orange'

trial-and-error experiments. She gives them five years to prove themselves. (In addition to her trial-and-error experiments, Debbie often visits public rose gardens, such as the Morcom Municipal Rose Garden in Oakland, to observe whether specific roses do well or poorly in specific conditions).

The biggest challenge is the heat. Debbie has tried a few of the old European roses ('Tuscany,' 'La Belle Sultane') and found that the winters were too warm for them to thrive. She says that 'Roseraie de L'Hay' was spectacular in Massachusetts, where she lived before, but "hot, alkaline-prone Livermore is not Rugosa territory." She finds that the Cochet roses fare better in cooler weather, but she still has a 'Niles Cochet' which makes the best bouquets. And a Moss rose from the Strong House Museum in Amherst blooms "some" but nothing like it did there: "Moss roses don't like it here."

Another consideration is drought. Debbie says that she finds more mildew and rust during drought years, and less when the roses are well-watered. "The soil here is gravelly clay-loam that tests neutral but some areas of the backyard show alkaline salt-blooms in

left: 'Gruss an Coburg';
above: 'Rose du Roi'

low-rain years." Some roses, like the 'Fortuniana' on the back hillside, require no irrigation at all. In times of severe drought, she can slowly wean many roses off water for up to a month. (With this regimen, the roses have no blossoms and more disease, but they survive.)

Space is yet another factor. Debbie began with many more Tea roses than she has now, having removed dozens of them. Only recently, she pulled out "Florence Bowers' Pink Tea," a found climbing rose that was overtaking her back yard. Debbie finds that "Teas get so huge that they greatly limit the variety of roses that I can grow; the ones voted out of the garden typically had some trait that diminished their appeal, such as chronic powdery mildew or adverse reactions to the summer heat we get."

At the other end of the spectrum, some roses refuse to die. Debbie has pulled out 'Reine des Violettes' six times. "I grew tired of its gangly nature and the screaming hot pink the blooms turn in our hot summers, [but] I finally gave up and said, 'All right, you can stay, but I'm not irrigating you,' and I don't. It doesn't care. It's survived for more than five years."

Beyond selecting for tough but well-behaved roses, how does Debbie care for her roses? It's quite minimal, she says. She takes the most care during planting, including Wonder Grow, the compost that Recology produces from the yard trimmings and food waste collected from the green bins in the Bay Area. Other than that, she waters most roses deeply with soaker hoses weekly during the summer, "throws on some alfalfa pellets" during the winter for fertilizer, and that's it. No sprays, chemicals, synthetic fertilizers, mineral amendments, or even mulches. (She considers mulch unnatural. Fallen leaves, on the other hand, are natural, so she doesn't rake them up.) Some varieties like 'Gruss an Coburg' are "susceptible to whatever our variety of black spot is, but conditions that allow that occur for only a few weeks in early spring in some years, so not a deal-breaker here." When aphids show up, Debbie leaves their control to the ladybugs that soon follow. Weeds? She says she gets a lot of winter birds (chickadees, oak titmouse, Bewick's wren, scrub jay, white- and golden-crowned sparrows, Cooper's hawk, to name a few), many of which chew up weed seedlings.

Can a healthy ecosystem carry the plants growing within it? I begin to think so. Then, too, roses have their own immune systems, and Debbie's roses support Robert Pyle's assertion in 1930 that "vigorous, strong-growing bushes are almost always able to defend themselves." ■

Curator's Report

Without taking much of a breather, The Friends of Vintage Roses has been quite busy. Perhaps the most exciting of our recent undertakings has been to initiate a virtual Time Capsule of Roses. We asked our international membership, "If you could choose one rose to send a hundred years into the future, which would it be?" Responses came from Australia, China, England, France, India, New Zealand—from around the world. The American Rose Society's magazine *American Rose* will publish our article with 90 responses in the forthcoming June/July 2022 issue. You can also read it on our website.

This enterprise will be ongoing for a time. If you wish to contribute a rose variety to the Time Capsule of Roses, send us an email at info@thefriendsofvintageroses.org. Include the name of the rose and why you have chosen it. Please limit your words to 200 or fewer. Do not choose your favorite rose; choose one you believe has enduring value. Attach a good photo, preferably a close-up of the flower or plant. If the photo is not your own, please include the photographer's name and assure us you have permission to use it.

On another note, on May 1, under the generous auspices of one of our curators, Susan Feichtmeier, we hosted a fundraiser for The Friends of Vintage Roses. This occurred on a pleasant, sunny afternoon on her property in the hills east of Santa Rosa where she grows at least 500 varieties of roses. The floribundas and shrubs create a carnival of color.

Angele Pernet (photo by Darrell Schramm)

Though slightly behind in preparation, we expect our Spring Rose Sale to occur mid-May. On our website, click on Rose Sales to download the list of available roses to order. Again, we do not ship. You will have to make an appointment for May 28 or 29 to pick up your rose order. Details are found on the Rose Sales page.

Floret, founded by Erin Benzakein, an old-fashioned flower and seed farm in Skagit Valley, Washington, arrived on the property of The Friends of Vintage Roses collection to film it and interview the head curator recently for a podcast on Magnolia Network. The filming took three days of twelve hours each. A documentary TV series about Floret was aired last year. We do not yet know when this one will air.

Finally, we have begun our bi-monthly Dirt Days when volunteers descend upon the gardens of our collection to help weed, fertilize, dig, plant and transplant roses. To view a list of work days, go to volunteercoordinator@thefriendsofvintageroses.org. We hope to see you there during one or more of those days. ■

'Talisman' (all photos by D. Schramm unless otherwise noted)

A Firebird Suite Of Roses

Darrell g.h Schramm

She didn't know that she was beautiful. She knew only three things: that she was inflamed with a fire for life, that those flames could touch others, and that—she didn't know the word for it—attention or love could alter everything. She was the firebird.

When the prince rode his steed into the forest, far ahead of his hunting party, she watched from a low branch as, clearly lost, he searched for a way out. Suddenly he turned. And with the swiftness of surprise, seeing her, he flung out his net, and she, just as surprised, found herself netted, caught in a tangled webbing.

"Oh, Beauty!" His words registered astonishment, admiration, and naiveté. "Firebird, you are mine."

'Ah!' she said. "So I am beautiful? But I am also dangerous." In a claw she held a rose, the color of her feathers, armed with vicious prickles. She looked at him seductively. "It is for you, Grand Prince, that I am on fire." (He didn't know she had just quoted Apollinaire.) "I guard this forest. Release me, and I will give you a feather from my plumage. It will protect you all your days."

The prince sat down. He frowned. He pouted. But he was kind-hearted young man. Then he arose, undid the net, thrust out his hand, and said, "Very well, a feather for life."

Looking back with some longing, he left with a flame-colored feather in his hand.

And preserve him it did. It secured him in the dark forest where he encountered and conquered, before emerging, the evil sorcerer Kaschei. The triumphant prince, a fiery feather trembling in his hat, would soon become king.

Seven firebird roses represent my version of this Slavic tale, five of which brighten my own garden. All Hybrid Teas, all fragrant (some more than others), and all not in the neon, unnatural colors of so many flowers today (not just roses), they are lustrous and usually, like flames in a fireplace or a conflagration, variable. Just as there are, to my mind, degrees of truth, so there are degrees of red, of yellow, of white. No one photo of any of these firebird roses will capture an invariable coloration of each rose. Each variety flickers, like flame, like firelight, varying in pigmentation.

The most famous of these roses is 'Talisman'. A strongly scented rose of 1929, 'Talisman' can be described as red-orange, lambent with pink, glowing yellow from the center, the reverse petals entirely yellow. Sometimes the guard petals appear mottled or veined. Indeed,

'Federico Casas'

it is among the first cultivated bicolor roses, 'Juliet' of 1910 being the first, followed by 'Betty Uprichard' in 1921 and 'Mrs Harriet Easlea' of 1922. But it can also be described as vermilion, coral orange, and yellow, depending upon which rose on the bush is being observed. It grows to three feet or so. A talisman is, of course, a charm, something meant to keep away evil and to bring good fortune. Thus far no vampire or werewolf has made its way to my garden or person—only opossums, raccoons, and skunks—and it's virtually free of pests and disease, so I suppose this rose is indeed a talisman.

'Federico Casas', also a rose of 1929, bred by the redoubtable Spaniard Pedro Dot, imitates some of the color in 'Talisman', but uses more salmon pink with orange flame and gold reverse, showing veins of deep pink. A fireplace luster seems to rise from within the flower. At times the rose appears a clear pink with an enflamed center. It will grow to five feet.

Federico Casas was a Catalonian philanthropist and patron of the arts, one of the sponsors of Barcelona's Universal Expo in 1888. When the Catalonian town of Sant Joan Despí floundered in debt, Casas paid off half of it. In 1908 he served as a university judge and later became the Executive Director of the new bullfight ring, Arenas de Barcelona.

A third rose of 1929 is the climbing Hybrid Tea 'Réveil Dijonnais' After it won the Gold Medal in Portland in 1929, it was introduced to the U.S. in 1931. This sometimes dramatic rose can be a blaze of flamenco red, radiant with a fiery yellow base and center. It's a reveille call, which can steal the show. But it can vary more unobtrusively with pale pink inner petals surrounded by petals brushed raspberry red and those encircled by mottled and freckled outer petals paler in color. Then again, the rose can show itself in a background of tawny yellow, hand-brushed in red, the background of the guard petals pale pink but the reverse

'Réveil Dijonnais' (photo by Connie Hilker)

always yellow. It's as though each varying rose is a different feather of the Firebird's plumage.

Semi-double to double, 'Réveil Dijonnais' offers some scent but less than the others mentioned here. It seems to be a warm climate rose that struggles where winters are cold. Perhaps that is why it has become uncommon. While Peter Beales Roses, David Austin Roses, and Loubert in France sell it, only Rogue Valley does so in the United States.

'Heinrich Wendland' was launched in 1930. A flutter of flames in red, yellow, and peach with clearly veined petals, it varies at times in a blend of orange and gold or the different shades of peach alone. Appropriately, it emits a fruity scent. It grows about three feet high.

left: 'Heinrich Wendland'; above: 'Condesa de Sástago'

An Austrian botanist, Heinrich Wendland (1791–1869) bred a yellow Buddleja (butterfly bush), numerous varieties of acacia, and other plants. He was the son of Johann Christoph Wendland who had named and described *Rosa bracteata*, the Macartney Rose. Like his father, Heinrich became the overseer of the Herrenhausen Gardens in Hanover.

'Condesa de Sástago' is another of the early bi-color roses, this one of 1932. Strongly scented (of ripe apples, it seems to me), this narrow plant grows from three to six feet high. Red petals with a yellow reverse, vary the red from flame red, fire engine red, cinnabar, raspberry, to a coral or orangish pink blend, the underside remaining sunflower or dandelion yellow. About fifty petals comprise this stunningly dramatic flower.

The Countess of Sástago (1889/1890–1975) was wedded in 1913 to the Marqués de Monistrol, 16th Count of Sástago, owner of a huge vineyard in Catalonia, a portion of whose vintage was set aside

for making sparkling wine in the traditional *champenoise* method, and which still produces on its 450 hectares the special Reserve Cavas, a Spanish champagne, and other wines.

'Catalonia'

Pedro Dot (1885–1976), the creator of the rose, was born on the estate of the double-titled Marquésa de Monistrol and Condesa de Sástago. His father had administered the property, which explains why the boy was born there. Ornamental plants, fruit trees, and a huge rose collection graced the lavish grounds. At sixteen, Dot traveled to France and Belgium where he decided his destiny included roses. When his father, Simon Dot Canalis I, set up a nursery business, Pedro Dot took charge of the roses there. Eventually he established his own rose nursery. The Condesa, who was his contemporary, became his benefactress.

Dot had already bred several distinguished roses, such as 'Mari Dot', 'Nevada', and 'Mme Gregoire Staechelin', all in 1927, 'Federico Casas' in 1929, and 'Duquésa de Peñaranda' in 1931.

A year after 'Condesa de Sástago' was released it won the Gold Medal in Rome. A writer in the *American Rose Annual* of 1940 reported that the rose is never "on the hospital list." A strong and healthy beauty, in 1948 it ranked as the fifth most popular or widely grown rose in the U.S. It remains an outstanding rose.

'Catalonia', another rose from the colorful suite of Pedro Dot's creations, exhales a pleasant and very strong fragrance. A plant of 1933, its round red buds become a flounce of flowers in lucent silk of an intense yet hazy carmine red hinting at purple, like logs aflame in a fireplace. The flowers are large, the petals reflexed and somewhat rippled. It grows two to two and a half feet tall.

No doubt Dot named the rose to celebrate Catalonia becoming a republic in April 1931.

Unfortunately, when Franco essentially initiated the Spanish Civil War (with help from Hitler, Mussolini, and Texaco Oil), the republic came to an end in 1939 and remained under the heel of Franco until the dictator died in 1975. While Catalonia was allowed self-governance, it is still held as part of Spain, partly because the region produces one-fifth of Spain's revenue in commerce and taxes.

'Fantastique'

Catalonia continues to seek its independence today. The fiery red and yellow flag of Catalonia seems appropriate to firebrands and firebirds.

These six roses were all put on the market during the Great Depression. In that drab and difficult time, the world had need of some uplighting, uplifting color.

The last of this Firebird Suite of roses, however, was introduced a decade later in 1943, by the famous Meilland who bred the Hybrid Tea 'Peace'. Also a fragrant rose, 'Fantastique' is a low grower, about two feet high, good for edging or a pot. Mine had been thriving in a container for thirteen years but has been in the ground a year now. Its name is particularly fitting, for in color the rose is not predictable or self-controlled. The flowers open in a feathery delirium of colors, no two roses on the bush alike, yet all clearly siblings. 'Fantastique' may show a lavender wash on the margins as though brushed with a pinion onto petals of cream that glow with a warm but bright yellow from the base upward into the bottom half of each petal. It may display Nankeen yellow petals with edges on both sides stained in scarlet or Spanish red. Then again, yellow may brightly color the lower half and base but creamy raspberry or rosy pink may brush the petals at the rim. Or the petals may be almost entirely cerise, blending lower into scarlet then merging into a Mars yellow center. Or—as a tri-color rose, it is simply unpredictable. 'Fantastique' does not wear the same dress twice.

The feather of the firebird preserves one from extinction. That feather in the hands of rose lovers has also saved a number of colorful, if not fiery, roses from extinction. These seven are just a few of them. ■

'Nasturana' (photo by Joan Harland)

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Mulch, compost, fertilizers, water, tools, etc. are constantly renewable needs for any garden, let alone a rose collection of several thousand plants. And so we ask for your continued support. Also, consider supporting us by volunteering for our Dirt Days. See the Volunteers page on our website for details. The work goes on.

And if you haven't done so yet, you can become a sustaining donor to The Friends of Vintage Roses. Just sign up at PayPal to give a little each month. Donating a small, recurrent sum is so easy you'll hardly miss it. You'll be sent a letter at the beginning of each year for the total amount you donated in the previous year. And. of course, you can cancel at any time.

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MISSION STATEMENT

The Friends of Vintage Roses exists to preserve and enhance the unique and extensive collection of historic roses developed by Gregg Lowery and Phillip Robinson, to establish the collection in a garden, and to share the collection with other public rose preservation efforts, all for the purpose of educating the public about the importance of the rose to human history, cultures, technology, and science.

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