



Ornement des Bosquets, Noisette

THE FRIENDS OF VINTAGE ROSES

Curators' Common Understanding

The Friends of Vintage Roses, in order to fulfill our mission to preserve the historic collection in our possession, engages with individuals, nurseries and public gardens to become “curators” to portions of their rose collection. These portions are typically groups representative of historical classes of roses such as Damasks, Mosses, Albas, Floribundas, some of which are quite large, like Hybrid Teas (more than 1,000 individual varieties), some small like Spinosissimas (40 varieties or so). Some collections are super groups, such as the Old European roses, which we describe as holding several rose classes, and representing a historical whole. We are beginning to expand how we define curated groups, and include a group of roses created by one rose breeder, or a group of species native to a geographical region, e.g. European, East Asian, Central Asian, etc.

We do not ask curators to sign an agreement, because we believe that this effort to preserve will be best achieved by building a mutual understanding and a community of rose preservationists that can be more successful as a community than as individuals. Common cause is our foundation.

Our Common Understanding is as follows:

What the non profit offers to the curator:

- We provide you with access to the mother plants in our collection to supply propagation material, subject to the approval of the TFoVR curator.
- We will work to supply you with rooted plants of the varieties in our collection. Our ability to do so depends upon our own volunteers largely and the capacity of our rooting facility, so it may take time for us to provide plants.
- The plants will be yours to keep, plant, or maintain in containers as suits your needs for maintaining them to the best of your ability.
- We will do our best to offer any advice on the collection itself or on best conditions for maintaining it.
- Should you lose plants we will do our best to assist you in finding replacements or in providing plants or cuttings.

What we ask of the curators:

- Should the need arise we ask you to share cuttings, plants or budwood back with us to replace a variety that we also curate in our garden.
- Share with other curators in our group, particularly with those who are duplicating the same collection as you do, to the best of your ability and your judgment of what is best for your mother plant.
- Maintain a physical record of your collection that is updated once each year and that you upload to HelpMeFind.com/Roses, the online rose encyclopedia.

The core of our “Common Understanding” is to build a community of sharing the roses. It has taken The Friends ten years to arrive at a point where our curator community is now blossoming. Much of the collection now is in the hands of at least two curators. Three groups have 3 curators. Our goal is to grow the curators further and further, so that we become a chain of preservation through sharing. Our decade of working on this idea has taught us that it is passion for the roses, individual passion, that keeps roses alive.

We must understand that most of the institutions that publicly hold and display plants—especially unusual garden plants like old roses—are not governed by mission statements that put preservation first. Botanical gardens follow missions based on educating the public, and very few of those missions prioritize preservation as the primary purpose for their existence. We cannot expect those institutions to work toward goals that they are not created for. Those institutions that do focus on preservation deserve to be supported by all of us.

For too long gardeners have expected much from institutions. However preservation has largely occurred in the hands of individuals. Our focus therefore is to build trust in a community who share one simple, common goal; to preserve the roses.

Our own experience with trying to maintain a very large collection has reminded us that gardening is an individual sport and that each of us want to follow our pathway. How we garden, how we maintain these collections will vary dramatically. And we all age and finally leave our gardens behind. So the curated collections must pass through many hands to arrive in a future place. So many times we hear from friends that they wished that there was someone to adopt their roses when they go. We hope to make those connections, finding younger gardeners who can carry forward the passions!



Peter Winne pruning “Florence Bower’s Pink Tea”

—Gregg Lowery, Curator, *The Friends of Vintage Roses*