

VOLUME XI

WINTER 1993

Number 3

CAL DEMPSEY NEWLY ELECTED CHAIRMAN

MRS. S.J. DERBY NEWLY ELECTED SECRETARY

ROSE RUSTLERS TO HAVE FUN DAY ON

SATURDAY, MARCH 20TH, 1993

AT PIONEER VILLAGE, JESSE JONES PARK

Harris County's Jesse Jones Park personnel has arranged for us to gather at the Nature Center in the Park between 12:30 & 1 pm to be taken on a tour of their Pioneer Village. It has been furnished to depict Pioneer life in 1830 Texas and many old roses are displayed with more being planted this year. Fortune's Double Yellow, Carnea, and Cherokee Rose should be in bloom at the time. Members are encouraged to bring any old roses to display. Also bring any old roses in pots that were introduced before 1840 that you would like to donate to be planted in the Park by the park horticulturist.

After we tour the Pioneer Park we are invited to stay and talk to the park visitors about old roses. We can assure you there will be many questions by the public during the afternoon. Please come and plant to stay! It will be loads of fun - and bring the kids!

See the mailing cover for maps you may need. An auditorium is in the Nature center where we will be meeting.

As announced in the last issue of the newsletter, The Old Texas Rose, our Chairman, Mrs. Jackie Fischer, expressed her desire to retire as Chairman and appointed a Nominating Committee, as prescribed in our "Bylaws." The Committee polled the other members of the steering committee and found everyone happy to serve except the Secretary, Marti King, and Jackie. The Nominating Committee submitted the names of Cal Dempsey and S.J. Derby for Chairman and secretary respectively. Each agreed to serve if elected at the Annual Meeting, in the fall, at the Rose Rustle. October 24, 1992. No other nominations were given from the floor and Cal and S.J. were unanimously elected.

You will find their names and addresses and their telephone numbers on the bottom of this page. You probably know both of them. Cal has been very active with us for several years and is also very active with the Extension Service in the Conroe area, where he lives. He is a Consulting Rosarian with the Houston Rose Society and is the 3rd Vice President.

You will remember S.J. as the rose arranger par excellence, who takes old roses and makes them show off their old rose charm whether it is in an old fashioned bouquet or a modern line design. She has been a member over 11 years.

| | | |
|-----------|--|--------------|
| CHAIRMAN | Cal Dempsey, 112 Lakeshore Dr., Conroe TX 77375 | 409/539-6840 |
| PROGRAM | Marion Brandes, Jr., 27326 Farm Creek, Huffman TX 77336 | 713/324-1457 |
| SECRETARY | Mrs. S.J. Derby, 12431 Broken Bough, Houston TX 77024 | 713/661-6886 |
| TREASURER | Mrs. Deanna Krause, 5020 Fairvent, Pasadena TX 77505 | 713/487-3347 |
| EDITOR | Mrs. Margaret Sharpe, 9426 Kerrwood, Houston TX 77080-5428 | 713/464-8607 |

Plantations & Roses

1 9 9 3

SPRING SYMPOSIUM

The Heritage Rose Foundation would like to extend a special invitation to members of the Texas Rose Rustlers to attend its Annual Meeting and conference in Natchez, Mississippi, May 6-9, 1993.

Thursday evening, May 6th, an informal reception will be held. Touring plantation gardens and a visit to the replanting of roses in the Historic National Cemetery on the bluffs overlooking the Mississippi River will be available Friday, May 7th.

Speakers on various topics related to collecting and enjoying old roses will be on the agenda Saturday. There will also be a colloquium on Heritage Rose preservation needs.

A post-conference workshop Sunday, May 9th, will provide hands-on experience in mapping rose plantings, using the Natchez City Cemetery as a pilot project.

Advance registration is required for the conference, tours, and workshop. For an information packet, send a business size (#10), self addressed envelope to **The Heritage Rose Foundation, 1512 Goreman Street, Raleigh NC 27606**

Phone: 919/834-2591

Registration Deadline April 23, 1993

Our Symposium this spring is scheduled for April 17th in the Community Center in Brenham. This is the same location we have used before and found most convenient. We will have a map of how to find the Community Hall in Brenham in the next "Old Texas Rose". The date of April 17th should find many roses in bloom as well as wildflowers.

The program is still being assembled, but one of our outstanding speakers will be William Grant, Aptos California. An excellent rose grower, he is also an English professor and very well read on rose books and authors. You will find his article on Climbers & Ramblers on the next page. (You may have already read it from the Heirloom Old Garden Roses 1993 catalog.) He has travelled to visit the finest rose gardens of France and Germany, not to mention those in the British Isles.

More speakers on interesting rose subjects will be announced in the next "OTR". Just remember that April 17th is the week end after Easter week end, April 11th, and there will likely be a flush of roses in bloom, so bring some specimens of blooms and tag them with their names, if known. Unknowns will be identified. This is always a very educational part of the symposium we enjoy.

SOUTHERN GARDEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

You may have heard of this group planning to hold their 11th annual meeting in Washington/Fayette counties in Texas in April 1993. It is a private organization that usually meets in southeastern gardens sites to study historical gardens and also landscaping. Dr. William C. Welch is the chairman of this event and has scheduled it to coincide with the peak of the wildflower season.

Please do not expect to attend this event unless you are already a member or are an invited guest. Their program and accomodations are limited to the members who are already registered to attend and membership in this specialized group is by invitation only.

W O O P S !

In the Winter 1991 issue of "The Old Texas Rose" we published information on Root Grafts method of rose propagation. In our introduction we remarked that we had enjoyed Malcolm Manners speaking to us at a symposium in 1988 at Mercer Arboretum. We were truly in error! Mr. Manners informed me that he had never been in Mercer Arboretum, much less spoke to us in the Ag building on Abercrombie, Houston TX.

My memory failed me, again! In checking back I find that I confused the talks on the rooting of cuttings with Dr. Brent Pemberton and that I heard Malcolm Manners speak elsewhere (in 1989) on propagation methods.

My sincere apologies to Mr. Manners, and also to Dr. Pemberton for erroneously crediting his speech to someone else.

LANDSCAPES USING ANTIQUE ROSES

by Marion Brandes

Antique roses are gaining wide spread popularity in Texas because of their landscape value and ease of care. Over the last five years antique roses have moved from the home garden to become key elements of the landscape. It is no longer rare to see them in public plantings, landscapes around office buildings, even along the banks of freeways.

Generally, antique roses have the following characteristics:

- * their flowers have soft pastel shades, rarely harsh, and are easily blended together.
- * they have bush forms with dense foliage and rounded outlines.
- * they have tolerance to disease, not leading to decline or loss of vigor.
- * ease of culture, not needing to be fussed over.
- * the form of their bloom is highly variable, usually at its most beautiful when fully open.
- * everblooming varieties have a long blooming season (10 months a year in Houston).

Virtually every landscape situation can be satisfied by one of the antique roses, since prostrate, pillar, climbing, rambling, upright, rounded, arching, and weeping forms all exist in a wide range of sizes from which to choose.

There are a number of situations and forms in the landscape to take advantage of with antique roses.

Specimen Plantings

When a single plant can be planted alone without any companions it should be one of exceptional beauty and performance. The following everblooming varieties are recommended:

- a silver-pink and rose pink Tea, Mrs. B. R. Cant,
- a creamy-white with carmine edging Tea, Marie Van Houtte,
- a flesh pink Bourbon, Souvenir de la Malmaison,
- a white China, Ducher,
- a dark lavender pink Species, The Chestnut Rose,
- a pink Polyantha, Caldwell Pink,
- a red & pink blend China, Archduke Charles, and
- a white, sometimes pink Polyantha, Echo.

Hedges

Many antique roses can serve in a colorful dense hedge, particularly if planted in two parallel rows with plants staggered to cover gaps between plants. When selecting varieties for hedges, it is important to choose those with dense foliage retained from the top to the bottom of the bush. Most China roses have these qualities. The following everblooming varieties are recommended:

- a cream and carmine pink blend China, Jean Bach Sisley,
- a light pink Shrub, Belinda's Dream,
- an apricot Polyantha, Perle d'Or,
- a pink Rugosa, Sarah Van Fleet or its white sport Mary Manners,
- a pale yellow Tea, Perle des Jardins,
- a pale pink almost white Hybrid Musk, Ballerina, and
- a multi-colored China, Mutabilis, "The Butterfly Rose".

Pillars

Antique roses with long canes flexible enough to be wrapped spirally around a pillar or post can make a strong statement in your landscape. The spiral wrapping also pays a big benefit because it produces a lot of lateral growth bearing blooms. Excellent varieties for pillars include:

- a creamy yellow Climber, Paul's Lemon Pillar,
- a white with pink centers Polyantha, Climbing Cothilde Soupert,
- a purplish-maroon Bourbon, Great Western,
- a strawberry-red everblooming Kordesii, Dortmund, and
- a striped pink everblooming Bourbon, Honorine de Brabant.

Arches and Pergolas

Vertical forms provide the most dramatic use of antique roses in the landscape. Climbers offer spectacular bloom displays in March, April, and May and often light displays repeatedly during the remainder of the year. The Noisette class of antique rose, the only class originated by an American, provided such displays during the days of Southern plantations and are still available today. Other classes for arches and pergolas include Climbing Teas, Ramblers (once blooming), Species, and some of the Hybrid Musks. If you haven't heard of pergolas before, think of them as a line of interconnected arches that you may walk through.

These same rose varieties would serve well also for lattice work covers over patios and wooden decks, as long as the openings are large. Many of the climbing antique roses have blooms and clusters of blooms on weak stems that hang down. This is a great asset for a vertically-trained plant because those standing below can fully enjoy the beauty of all the open blooms. The following varieties are recommended as exceptionally suited to overhead situations:

- a butter-yellow everblooming Noisette, Marechal Neal,
- a soft yellow or white early blooming Species, Lady Banks' Rose,
- a white everblooming Noisette, Lamarque,
- a golden-apricot everblooming Noisette, Reve d'Or,
- a pink, peach, and cream Climbing Tea, Souvenir de Madame Leonie Viennot,
- a salmon-pink once-blooming Wichuraiana Rambler, Francois Juranville, and
- a white with lemon center once-blooming Wichuraiana Rambler, Alberic Barbier.

TRELLIS

For utilizing vertical effects trellises are more easily erected and maintained. Do not try to use any of the commercially available fan trellises because they are too small. It is best to build an 8' x 8' trellis of cedar 1" x 2"s allowing one foot square openings. Also keep the trellis at least one foot from any wall or fence to allow air drainage and to thwart spider mites. Once again climbing roses without stiff stems on the blooms are the best for this application. Recommended moderate size climbers are as follows:

- a white 200-petalled everblooming Climbing Tea, Sombreuil,
- a pastel yellow everblooming Noisette, Celine Forestier,
- a flesh-pink Bourbon, Climbing Souvenir de la Malmaison,
- a white repeat blooming Noisette, Madam Alfred Carrier, and
- a spectacular golden sunset tones Species Hybrid, Fortune's Double Yellow.

PEGGING

If you have a large surface in your landscape, approximately a circle 8' in diameter, try planting a Hybrid Perpetual or Bourbon in the center and pegging down each of the long canes outward like spokes on a wagon wheel. These classes of antique roses produce a great abundance of bloom from the many laterals that sprout all along the length of their canes. The effect is even more dramatic if the circular area is a hill so that the canes are going downward over a domed shape. Pegging can be done with stakes made of heavy gauge aluminum wire that is easily bent. Expect heavy Spring bloom and a much lighter bloom in Fall.

Some of the varieties for pegging are:

- a raspberry pink Bourbon, Madame Isaac Pereire,
- a pale lavender pink Bourbon, Madame Ernest Calvat,
- a dark red Hybrid Perpetual, Henry Nevard,
- a snow white Hybrid Perpetual, Frau Karl Druschki, and
- a pink striped Hybrid Perpetual, Vick's Caprice.

Fences and Split-Rails

The Hybrid Musk roses are by far the best suited for this application because their long stiff canes tie up to rails or fence and are prolific bloomers. Some exceptional everblooming Hybrid Musks are as follows:

- the red nearly thornless Nur Mahal,
- the salmon pink to white Penelope,
- the buff orange Buff Beauty,
- the purple-pink Belinda, and
- the pink Felicia.

Mixed Border

The most popular landscape treatment with antique roses is in the mixed border. Many different varieties are interplanted and usually perennials are planted as companion plants. For this application you have the entire assortment of antique roses available. Color, shape, size, and bloom frequency are the criteria for placement. Be sure and leave sufficient room for growth, since this is the most frequent problem. Overlapping plants are quite desirable, however, because that's when antique roses are at their best.

The northern areas of Texas should look to the hardier Bourbons and Hybrid Perpetuals, whereas the milder winter southern areas of Texas should take full advantage of the Teas, Noisettes, and Chinas. The other antique rose classes such as Polyanthas, Hybrid Musks, Climbers and Ramblers are adequately suited for most areas of Texas. The best news has been saved for last..... that a landscape full of antique roses is one filled with wonderful fragrances!

Items of Worthy Note

Please see if a pink highlighter is on your address label. It shows that this is the last "Old Texas Rose" due on your current membership. We apologize for being late in mailing this issue, but a major reason was that many members kept sending in their dues/subscriptions late. One glance at the membership list will show you how rapidly our membership is growing! Labels coded **Sp93** have until June 15th.

Open House at the Antique Rose Emporium will be April 24 & 25. Those desiring to receive the ARE Newsletter must subscribe to it - \$5 per year. The Fall Festival at the Emporium will be November 4, 5 and 6, 1993.

The Houston Rose Society Show will be April 10th at Memorial City Mall. There will be lots of all kind of roses to see!

CLIMBERS AND RAMBLERS

by William A. Grant

Why are American rose gardeners afraid of ramblers and climbers? Even U.S. botanical gardens rarely show off the power and beauty of these roses. Walk through most English and European collections and you will see scores of ramblers and climbers used on pergolas, arches, fences, walls, and pillars.

So many people answer that they have a small garden and do not have room for such vigorous roses. Indeed! If you look at the pictures of Bagatelle, L'Hay, Sangerhausen you will see that their displays of ramblers and climbers are usually on pillars, which take up the same space as a hybrid tea except that the plants go up rather than out. Careful planning is all that is needed. True, it is hard to find strong metal pillars in any nursery. But there are many materials now available that can be used as supports for these beautiful flowers.

If placed at appropriate spots in your garden, pillars and supports can help you create a great deal of color when you plant ramblers and climbers. I have a long pergola with six pillars under which I have planted different climbers. My 'Constance Spry' is now 10 feet high and will start to spread horizontally along the arch. Yet it takes up little space below.

Those who are lucky enough to have fences or walls can use both types of roses to great advantage. And trees are ready-made for romping roses. My 'Alberic Barbier' took four years to reach full sun through a plum tree, but now it is spreading over the whole neighborhood. What a joy when it blooms! Yet it has taken no more room below than a regular hybrid tea.

Build a small arbor in your garden so you can use a rambler such as 'Bobbie James'. It grows quickly, is easy to train upward so that, once established aloft, it will cascade downwards in a breathtaking waterfall of bloom and perfume. Find a tree where you can put 'Paul Transon'; after a few years this reblooming *Wichuriana* hybrid will give you great pleasure with its copper/orange/salmon blooms.

'Venusta Pendula', a hybrid *Arvensis*, is in most European public rose gardens because it produces one of the most abundant blooms of any rose. Practically unknown here, it deserves a far wider fame. It can be used on a pillar, on a wall, or up a tree.

'Blairii No. 2' is a favorite in English gardens because its large, double, cupped blooms

flaunt their beauty and perfume every spring on poles or pillars. It is hard to beat 'New Dawn' for its hardiness and profusion of bloom whether it is grown as a shrub, on a pergola, or as a weeping standard.

If you want to live dangerously, try 'Kiftsgate' or 'La Mortola' if you have a large tree and don't care what the neighbors think. The former will reach sixty feet if properly watched and guided, but its display will stop airline traffic! The latter is a bit more sedate, but not by much. My 'Kiftsgate' will eventually smother a thirty foot fir and 'La Mortola' (a *R. brunonii* seedling) will cover several oaks.

Do some reading on these ramblers and climbers. When you visit gardens, look to see if any are there, and take a good look at your garden to see if you haven't been a bit too conservative about your choices. The thrill of seeing one of these space-eaters in bloom is hard to match.

May I recommend a few others? 'Thalia' is an early blooming white rambler that loves trees. 'Kew Rambler', a *R. soulieana* cross with 'Hiawatha', has lovely pink-white clusters along its canes. For warm areas nothing can beat 'Belle of Portugal' with its pointed buds and handkerchief-like flowers in the early spring. 'Lawrence Johnston' is a yellow jewel that likes the setting of a large tree. 'City of York', which is unfairly ignored even though it is one of the hardiest of the white climbers, loves a wall. 'Breeze Hill' deserves a wider audience for its apricot buds that fade slightly on opening and wonderful foliage.

Planning is required. And there are many benefits. Once established the rambler and climber require very little maintenance except pruning and monitoring. I give them all a good spring (in February) dose of organic fertilizer. They are all on a minimum drip system. If you can, mix them with species clematis.

The best sources of information on ramblers and climbers are the following: Peter Beales' Classic Roses, Christopher Warner's Climbing Roses (strong on new roses rather weak on the older ones), Climbing Roses Old and New (alas, now out of print) by Graham Thomas; Gerd Krussmann's The Complete Book of Roses has a good section on the development of these roses, and for accurate color photographs no one can better Phillips and Rix.

(William A. Grant will lead a tour of Bagatelle, Rosarie de L'Hay, Tete d'Or, Sangerhausen, Dortmund, Kassel rose gardens as well as a number of private gardens that feature heritage roses in May/June of 1993. If you are interested in joining this group, write to him at 1678 Pleasant Valley Road, Aptos, California 95003.)

Dear Ladies,

On one of my visits to the library I read an article of your thriving varieties of roses - your rustling techniques in growing which I remember with interest. I live in a home that was built in the 1920's where my husband, now deceased, planted 6 or 7 varieties that have died but there is one still remaining. It does not always flower well. I remember using willow water and I will keep it in mind this summer. I don't have funds to replace the roses and am wondering how I can get a "cut" of an old rose variety that would require little care, but **not** a climbing rose, but that will survive our Illinois winters. Although I have limited funds for plants, I am saving to get a hand-held non-power mower so I can mow the yard myself this year. I remember my mother on the farm using techniques written in the magazine article. I trade, transplant and save seeds and replant each year. Some come up and some don't. It is difficult to write to ask a favor; I sure hope I'll hear from you

Sincerely,

Shirley M. Null
522 Dawson Avenue
Rockford IL 61107-4525



Dear Margaret Sharpe,

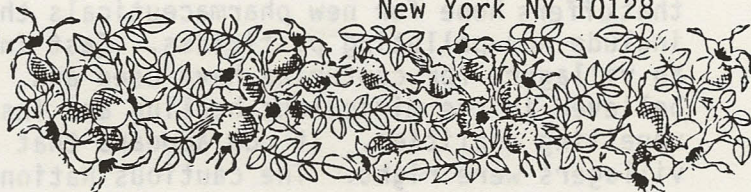
I garden at a community garden in the Lower East Side of Manhattan, called "La Plaza Cultural." I am disabled and broke on SSI, but, I have been trying to establish La Plaza as a test garden of sorts.

I scurf rose seeds from botanical gardens and elsewhere and grow roses from seed. I strive for genetic diversity. On your next rose rustle could you please glean me a bunch of rose hips and send them to me so I may denude, scarify, stratify them and grow baby rose bushes? I care naught for true-to-type. I love open-pollinated from diverse sources.

Rose seeds in the hip are fine too, as I don't mind the prickles. Where are the best places to find that odd wild rose?

Thanx,

Anna Yamada
45 E. 89th St.
New York NY 10128



NEW SOURCE FOR COLLECTORS

Vintage Gardens, 3003 Pleasant Hill Rd.
Sebastopol CA 95472

While this rose supplier is not very new to the collector market, it is rapidly growing and recognized as a source for many scarce cultivars. You will drool over their new and enlarged catalog now available for \$4.00. Until now the only listing available was a typed list for \$1 SASE. It is now a beautiful book of beautiful watercolor and line drawings of the roses by James Sagmiller. In fact, they have been overwhelmed by orders since the new catalog went out, and the 1993 catalogs are in very short supply. They have been advertising a sale on their roses - bare root plants 7 roses \$7 each from their 1993 catalog, 7 or more roses + tax & shipping and 3 alternate choices. Orders must be in with the payment in their hands by **February 22nd**. Too late for us, but we suggest you send for a new catalog from which you can place an order for next fall. You will thrill at their unusual listings!

ANYONE HAVING AN OLD ROSE
THAT HAS GROWN TOO LARGE
FOR YOU TO KEEP

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THE TEXAS ROSE RUSTLERS ARE
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N E E M

A POWERFUL "SAFE" INSECTICIDE

The informative brochure "Gardens Alive" that many gardeners have been receiving from the company of the same name for many years now carries a product named "BioNeem". It is this company that has made so many organic control products readily available to us, both for insect control and fertilizers. It is still one of the best sources for home gardeners to obtain beneficial insects and out-of-style products like "sticky traps", sabadilla dust, Bordeaux Mixture (copper sulfate & lime), as well as the environmentally safe "new era" products, such as Neem. If you do not get their catalog and would like to get a free wealth of information on organic products drop them a card with your name and mailing address requesting this free gift.

NEEM is a tree commonly growing in India as a shade tree. It is a living chemical factory that offers hope for new pharmaceuticals that include non-polluting pesticides. East Indian villagers for centuries have used and believed in the miraculous healing and insect repelling qualities. It now appears that the villagers were right. The cautious National Academy of Sciences has lately released a report entitled, "Neem: A Tree for Solving Global Problems."

The leaves and olive-shaped fruit contain biodegradable substances that repel insects and disrupt their growth, other materials are antifungal, anti-viral, anti-bacterial. Soap and a decay preventing toothpaste are made from oil extracted from the seeds. So far the most dramatic promise seems to be the chemicals it has that protects itself from insects. Their effect has been compared to synthecics such as malathion and DDT and are as effective or moreso, but are enviornmentally friendly and evidentially safe to use. Farmers in underdeveloped countries soak the seeds and leaves in water and alcohol, then scoop off the oil that rises to the top.

There have been many tests of neem's effects on humans and other mammals and beneficial insects. Lab rats had neem extract brushed on their skin ate more food and gained more weight than untreated rats. When it was sprayed on peanuts a common fungus that produces aflatoxin, the most potent carinogen known, could no longer cantaminate peanuts.

USDA scientists sprayed neem extracts on one half the leaves of soy beans and left the other halves untreated. The leaves were placed in containers with Japanese beetles. Within 48 hours the beetles had the leaves that were untreated down to the veins but starved to death rather than touch the treated foliage! Soy beans sprayed with neem extract but grown in the field were protected as long as 14 days, while untreated plants were chewed up in one night by a variety of insects. Larvae from gypsy moths were sprayed and they ceased reproduction. In fact, some 200 species of insect species have found to be inhibited by neem extract: Mexican bean beetles, Colorado potato beetles, locusts, grasshoppers, 6 different cockroaches, cabbage loopers, and many more.

All the promise shown by a long known product on which research has been done is known only to a handful of entomoligists, foresters and pharmacologists, and to the traditional farmers of South Asia. Again it looks like **greed** shows itself through commercial chemical companies withholding much needed products from the public. The USDA has it available to Extension Service use in the various states to try and report results. Our Harris County Extension Service has a supply to test but thus far few of the horticulturists have used it and no reports are available.

Should you want to try some yourself you can order some from "Gardens Alive":

#8642 Makes 2.7 gal. (8 oz.) \$12.95

#8643 Makes 5.3 gal. (16 oz.) 24.95

#8644 Makes 10.7 gal. (32 oz.) 39.95

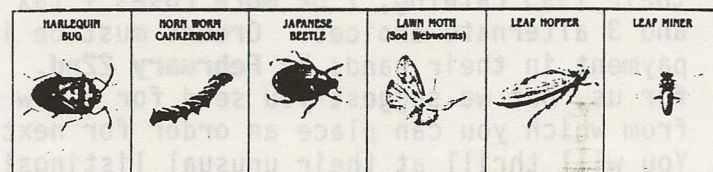
Plus shipping of \$3.60 to \$10 order;

\$4.95 to \$25 order; \$6.60 to \$45 order.

(State on order if you DO NOT want other companies to get your address)

Send check, money order or credit card to:

GARDENS ALIVE!
5100 Schenley Place
Lawrenceburg, IN 47025



02/08/93

Texas Rose Rustlers Membership Roster

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| Mrs. Shirley Bayer | 3810 Wickersham | Houston TX 77027 | 713-622-1029 |
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| Greg Cresswell | 35 Cornerbrook | The Woodlands TX 75381 | 713-775-2064 |
| Patrick Cullen | 300 W. 108 St. #8D | New York NY 10025 | 212-866-8960 |
| Margaret R. Curlet | 2417 Pelham | Houston TX 77019 | 713-522-0742 |
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| Harriet/Frank Dezutto | 5130 La Cour Monique | New Orleans LA 70131 | 504-391-1716 |
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Elvin McDonald is a writer on horticultural subjects who moved to Houston last fall. He was working at the Massachusetts Botanic Garden, Boston MA and this article appeared in the July 1992 issue of the Garden's news. He kindly gave us permission to print it in OTR. When he can take time from his regular landscaping and decorator jobs he visits the Rose Rustler events to gather more information for the book on roses he is writing.

EDITOR

THE CUTTING EDGE

Last year I was picking up stakes, moving from New York to Houston. Now I am pounding them in, to get an idea of how the landscaping of the yard might continue.

The grand tour includes a walk through my imaginary garden. Some visitors see the vision implied by the stakes, others trip. Out of maybe a dozen, only one has challenged me: He prefers unbroken lawn to my proposed *allee grande*, a 100-foot-long walkway from the front gate to the back fence that would be four or five feet wide, bounded on either side by planting beds spilling with flowers and edibles, studded every ten feet by pairs of tree-form standards. Until my friend's remark my main consideration was which tree or plants—rose, oleander, crape myrtle, azalea, lantana, tibouchina, pelargonium, *Clerodendrum trichotomum*—the same or mixed and matched? At the moment the stakes have been pulled and the area mown over so that when newly cut and backlit by the setting sun it looks deceptively like a lawn. Truth is, certain constraints—deadlines for books, availability of funds—force me to make haste with deliberate slowness. Meanwhile, I can enjoy obsessing in dreamtime about my *allee* (and an alley too).

The house, a single-story, wood-shingled, Hollywood-style bungalow sits 70 feet from the street on a flat lot 80 feet wide and 170 feet deep. Across the back there is a common alley/drainage ditch with multistemmed mulberry trees, wild grapes and lots of unknowns. I was having a great time using this as my source for homemade tomato stakes, twigs to weave into wattle fences and vines for wreath forms until a neighbor cautioned, "You be careful! Snakes live out there!"

There are conifers in front of the house, toward the street, and along the north—arborvitae, cedar and juniper, ranging from 20 to 60 feet. A heavily berried holly with three trunks two stories high rises from the south edge of the lawn, just outside my office window. In the back, two mature, producing pecan trees flank a dog yard that could become a greenhouse. A towering pine in the yard next door and a couple of native oaks complete the inventory of major trees in my immediate vicinity. When this part of Houston was developed around 1947 some existing trees were saved, which accounts for the aged specimens that dot the neighborhood.

Space available on my lot for gardening varies from full sun to full shade. I've broken ground in a couple of obvious places but nothing major is going to happen until the inferno of summer has been experienced. A north-facing wall next to the patio that receives little or no direct sun has shelving for potted plants—Asiatic hybrid lilies, honeysuckle fuchsias, florist gloxinias, browallias, bromeliads, *Primula obconica* and *Jasminum tortuosum*—whose abundance of flowering from February to May tells me to be ever mindful of the sun's strength at this latitude and the protracted season of temperatures above 80°F (27°C).

Behind the house, adjacent to the wall garden and a terracotta tile terrace, are two sunny to half-sunny planting beds 6 by 12 feet, each centered by a lollipop standard raphiolepis tree ten feet tall. One of my first acts was to

clear these beds of weeds—mostly sedges and a rhizomatous, pink-flowered oxalis I once encouraged in pots—and to transplant the remaining narcissus to a holding area. After spading and raking, the beds were divided into modules two feet square using 12-inch mulberry stakes and green plastic plant ties pulled taut like a ribbon near the soil surface. Inspired by the idea of food gardens as beautiful kitchen gardens visited in Holland, England and France, and Mel Bartholomew's square-foot gardening precepts, I then designed each module so that it stands alone and, hopefully, as an integral part of the whole. Three modules on either side of the walkway between the beds were centered with a yellow-flowered rosebush; each square of soil surrounding the roses was seeded with red and green leaf lettuces, radicchio, corn salad, radishes and mustard in an array of mix and match circles, squares and triangles, alone and within each other. All the other modules in turn have been planted tick-tack-toe fashion.

The garden ever evolves, one crop succeeding another. I never touch the ground here or contemplate the next activity without being reminded of lessons learned while assisting Brooklyn Botanic Gardener Bernard Currid. Bernie has found it best not to start in the morning more than can be finished by quitting time; also, that others will pay your garden no more respect than you do. Gardening by the module lets me weed a whole garden while I wait for the microwave to heat a cup of soup and also gives constant challenges that can be met without straining the body or the bankbook, a sort of time-release dose of satisfaction.

Another lesson learned from Bernie is to use protected microclimates within the garden for starting seeds and rooting cuttings. These often turn out to be spaces newly cleared of a finished crop, with extra shade and wind protection afforded by neighboring plants. If not appropriated by the gardener, such places will be immediately usurped by weeds, an earthly playing out of idle hands being the devil's workshop.

If you go along with the claim that everything is bigger in Texas, then my modular kitchen fork and knife—the tools most used—garden is a joke. I prefer to think of it as a place where smaller is better, where looking down on a patch of ground two feet square I can see rows of lettuce as emerald and burgundy hedges around gargantuan roses; a module of striped beets on six-inch centers as a vegetable plaid of red and green on an earthy brown field; and a 6- by 24-inch weaving of interlocking twigs as a natural, self-reliant means of separating and defining adjacent rows of oakleaf lettuce and Italian parsley.

Every climate has its creatures that come out in the night and graze one's most prized plants. Here, following heavy rains—nearly 40 inches in the first five months this year—slugs and snails are the barbarians at the gardener's gate. Saucers of beer set out at dusk yield a stupendous overnight catch. Writers incline to specify stale beer (the same as "sharp knife") but I find the slugs are more interested in fresh since it is the smell to which they are drawn....irresistibly.

—Elvin McDonald

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