

annually. Their temperatures remain mild. They are rarely below 50 degrees or above 90 degrees. Bermuda's soil is mainly alkaline with a limestone base.

The list I made mainly consisted of the roses we grew at the Antique Rose Emporium. There were many more throughout the book that were salt-spray tolerant. To find this book, I would check your local book stores or library. You may even find it on the Internet.

Without further ado...

Sir Thomas Lipton
Smith's Parish
Emmie Gray
The Fairy
Perle D' Or
Little White Pet
Cecile Brunner
La Marne
Penelope
Buff Beauty
Cl. Souvenir De La Malmaison
New Dawn
Mermaid
Alberic Barbier
Albertine
Reve d' Or
Lamarque
Fellenberg
Champney's Pink Cluster
Souvenir De La Malmaison
Souvenir De St. Anne's
Safrano
William R. Smith
Rosette Delizy
Mrs. Dudley Cross
Mrs. B.R. Cant
Mme. Lombard
General Schablikine
Louis Philippe
Mutabilis
Green Rose
Cramoisi Superieur
Archduke Charles
Spice
Old Blush

Ray Ponton Roses

by Sandra Smith



What do Henry
Frankenstein, Henry Jekyll,

and Ray Ponton have in common? They are all mad scientists. While Frankenstein and Jekyll were just plain mad, Ponton is simply mad about roses, especially sturdy roses.

Ray came from sturdy stock himself. Family legend says that the Pontons were of French descent having originally come to New Amsterdam, New York, in the 17th century. Ray's ancestors (William, two sons and their wives) came to Texas in 1833, after 14 years in Missouri, and before that, Amherst, Virginia. Indians tortured and scalped William in 1834 on Ponton Creek, north of Hallettsville. Joel (Ray's great-great-grandfather) was a doctor, minister, rancher, and farmer. Having inherited a legacy for determination, it is no wonder that Ray's objective is to hybridize sturdy, fragrant, repeat-blooming, disease and pest resistant specimens, fulfilling every gardener's dream.

Even though roses were cultivated and hybridized in China for at least 2,000 years, they did not start to become popular in the West until the 14th and 15th centuries. According to Roy Shepherd in History of the Rose, the first hand-pollinated rose was Safrano in 1839. Hybridizing in America began in 1811 when John Champney, who was a Charleston rice grower and plantation owner, crossed Parson's Pink Rose China (a.k.a. Old Blush, given to him by Philippe Noisette) with Rosa Moschata, a White Musk, creating Champney's Pink Cluster. Noisette, a Charleston nurseryman, and his brother Louis, of Paris, France, propagated and crossed seedlings of Champney's Pink Cluster with other roses, which resulted in the class of roses known as the Noisettes, the first of which was named Blush Noisette.

Amazingly, sprinkling a little magic potion (pollen) in the right place at the right time can produce a vast variety of color, form, size, habit, and fragrance. You can imagine

the suspense and eagerness to see the color of the first bloom. Occasionally a hybridizer has been known to slowly peel back a bud to sneak a peak. It is truly a labor of love with unknown results as no two seedlings are alike.

The development of shrub roses by Austin and Buck resurrected the use of roses in commercial landscaping as well as home gardens. Ordinary people, who previously shied away from the popular Hybrid Teas, can now successfully grow low-maintenance roses.

Ray Ponton roses are also meant to provide more pleasure than pain. He began hybridizing in 1990, after retiring from the banking business in Taylor, Texas. His first two roses that he considered successful were Katy Girl and Cameron Bohls, both propagated in 1997 and registered in 2000. Ponton gave plants to Chamblee's Nursery in 2001, which propagated and offered them for sale in the fall of 2004. As you can see, the painstaking process takes about 8 years. Therefore, we should be very grateful to all of the hybridizing scientists, especially Ray, who have created thousands of roses for us to enjoy.

Ray's hybridizing techniques were improved after he discovered the internet, where many rosarians around the world generously share their personal experiences. That is where Ray met one of his mentors, Kim Rupert of California, who has his roses at Ashdown Roses. Ray was relieved to learn from Kim that 20% germination is considered a "good" success rate for hybridizers.

He now has 13 registered roses, all with interesting, meaningful names: After Dark (dark red) has wine-colored canes. Annie Nell (pink) – Ray described as "a girl I once knew, in fact she took care of me for a number of years, when I was young. I called her mom. White roses were at her funeral, so I took pollen and put it on Lillian Austin and the result was Annie Nell." Baron De Bastrop (deep pink) was an interesting character in Texas history, a friend of Stephen F. Austin. Ray named Cameron Bohls (dark red) and

Meredith Bohls (pink blend) after his grandchildren. Katy Girl (pink) is an open pollinated seedling of Katy Road Pink ("found" rose), which has now been identified as Carefree Beauty. Chireno (deep pink) named for the hometown of Shannon Sherrod, a fellow Texas Rose Rustler. Deanna (pink blend) is appropriately named for Deanna Krause, who, as most of you who know, loves unusually striking rose colors. Peaceful Habitations (pink speckled) has an azalea or orchid likeness with its specks and was named after Joe Cooper's nursery. Sarah Juanita (yellow) is Joe Cooper's wife. San Gabriel (yellow blend – mixed with a dark pink) is a river in Central Texas. Splendora (red) was also the home of several Texas rose rustlers. Tejas (pink blend) is the only climber (12' to 14') so far.

Four other roses have study names, but are not yet registered. Ray is considering naming them: Atocha's Gold (yellow), Ida Red (red), Miss Bloomsalot (pink blend), and Rustler's Dream (white blend). Ray also has several other creations including roses named for his wife, Margaret, and his two daughters.

Most of the Ponton roses can be viewed on www.helpmefind.com search by Breeders. Some can be purchased at the following nurseries: Chamblee's (Tyler), Del Real (Caldwell), King's (Tenaha), Nacogdoches (Nacogdoches), Peaceful Habitations (Boerne), and Antique Rose Emporium (Independence).

Ray wanders all over Texas sharing his rose creations with gardeners and nurseries, more like Johnny Appleseed than Frankenstein or Jekyll. Why? Any mad scientist can tell you that critical evaluation from different microclimates is crucial to determining the true success of any particular rose. Besides, what better way to spend your time than to share your creations with gardeners who are also mad about roses?