

## *Etiquette of the Rustle*

Rose rustling is a time honored tradition here in Texas, and indeed, around the world! There is a special thrill in spying an old rose on a forgotten byway, and bringing home a slip to root in our own gardens. In previous generations, there were perhaps more abandoned homesites and old, falling-down barns from which to scavenge these lovely survivors. Urban renewal, suburban and rural development, have encroached on the wilds of the world, and just as wildlife habitats are changing, so is the environment of rose rustling!

There are a few simple but important rules to follow each time you rustle a rose. Please attend these rules carefully, and help to maintain the goodwill of the public, and the good name of the Texas Rose Rustlers. This organization does not endorse trespassing, nor removal of plant materials for which any would-be rustler does not have the proper authorization/permission to obtain. Simply stated, any rose that is not on your own property, probably belongs to someone else. It is the rustler's responsibility to investigate ownership, and ask permission to visit the site and take a cutting. In the event that a rose is found "wild", please make certain that you are not trespassing on government land, or property that is indeed under the care of an absentee owner.

After learning who the correct person would be to grant permission to visit and/or take a cutting from a rose you are interested in, it is a good idea to identify yourself politely, and explain the interest the rose holds for you. Tell them a little about the Texas Rose Rustlers, our mission to locate and preserve antique roses. Most people will be flattered by your interest, and gardeners are notoriously generous souls! In the event that you meet someone who is in possession of that perfect gem of a rose that does not share your enthusiasm, they may allow you to get your cutting and move along, or they may say "NO". In this event, respect that no does indeed mean no, and thank them for their time just the same. No lurking about to return after dark, no matter how tempting, either!

It is an excellent idea to carry a camera with you on your rustling forays, to take photographs of the blooms, the hips, the leaves, the entire plant, and any other details of note

that may provide interest, or a clue about the identity of a found rose. Make notes about what you see in the environment, such as “growing vigorously into a pecan tree, blooming well in partial shade”, or “shrub has extreme chlorosis, soil very moist and boggy”.

Ask the owner questions about the plant: How long has it been here? Who planted it? Does it bloom in cycles throughout the year, or just in the spring or summer? Do you ever fertilize it, and if so, with what? Avoid criticism of any kind in regard to the health, location, culture or care of the rose! Make a pleasant experience of the interaction for yourself and the rose’s caretaker! Offer to root another of this rose for its owner, or offer a trade of cuttings of a different rose of your own, in exchange for the cuttings. A thoughtful gesture is to gift the owner with a small portion of your favorite rose food in an “individual serving” sized bag or box. I have created decorative wax lined paper lunch sacks with a calligraphy marker, listing the ingredients of a mixture of dry, organic fertilizers, with the instructions “Rose Chow: just add to soil around plant dripline, water thoroughly, and apply sunshine” It never fails to get a chuckle!

When taking your cuttings, be mindful of the health and size of the shrub, and never remove more than the plant can tolerate. Rustling some cuttings should not take the place of the annual pruning! The owner should not be prompted to wonder if the rose is going to have a hard time making it through the coming season!

Follow your visit with a thank you note or phone call within a few days. It is important to show appreciation for the good things in life, and what could be better than the sharing of a beautiful rose?

Respectfully,  
Allison Strong  
TRR Secretary, 2005-2007  
February 14, 2005