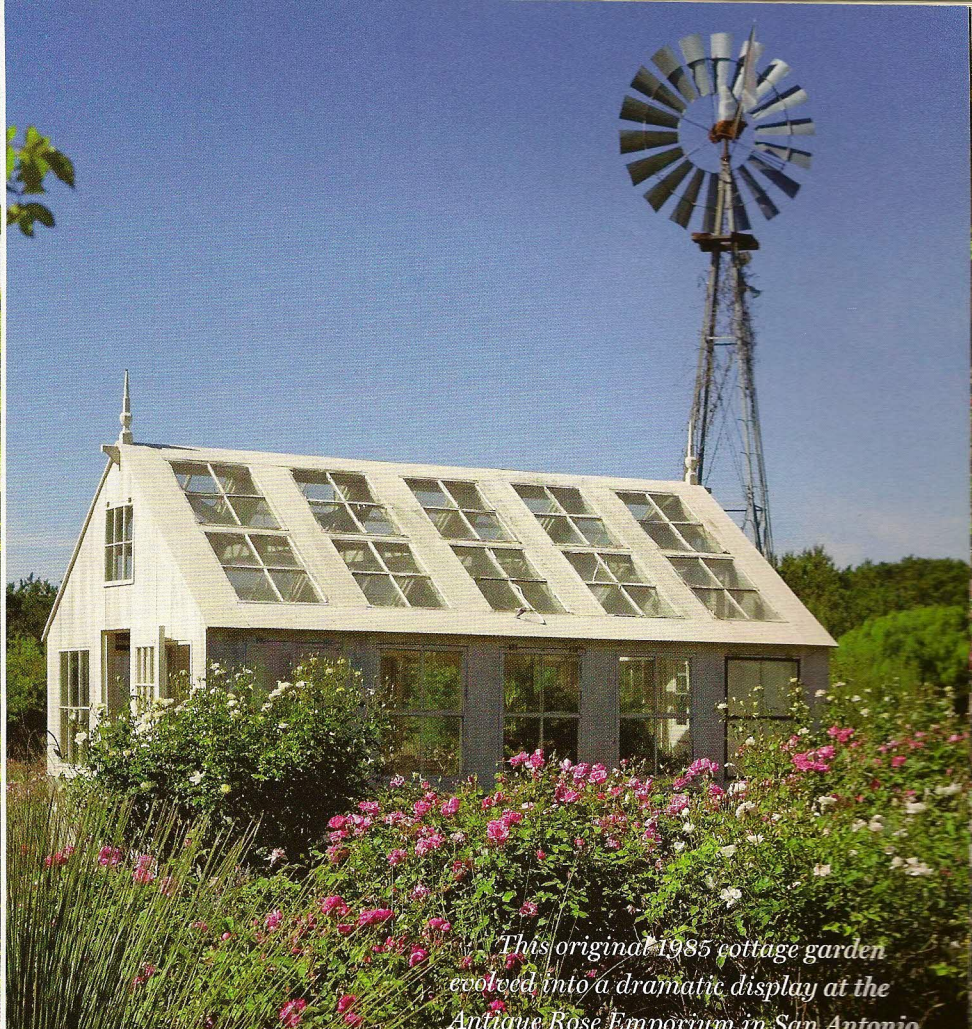


# Rescuing Precious Heirloom *Roses*

INSPIRED BY ITS OWNER'S DEDICATION AND PASSION FOR PRESERVING GLORIOUS GARDENS OF THE PAST, THE ANTIQUE ROSE EMPORIUM CULTIVATES AND SELLS A TREASURED ARRAY OF ENDURING TEXAS PLANTS.

TEXT KAREN L. DARDICK PHOTOGRAPHY KATE SEARS



*This original 1985 cottage garden evolved into a dramatic display at the Antique Rose Emporium in San Antonio, Texas. Native plants combine with roses, much like in an 1850s pioneer garden. Growing as shrubs or ascending posts or arches, roses create versatile and hardy design statements. Boldly sprawling 'Dortmund', opposite, blankets a large fence. Delicate 'Climbing Pinkie', below right, blooms in beautiful clusters.*



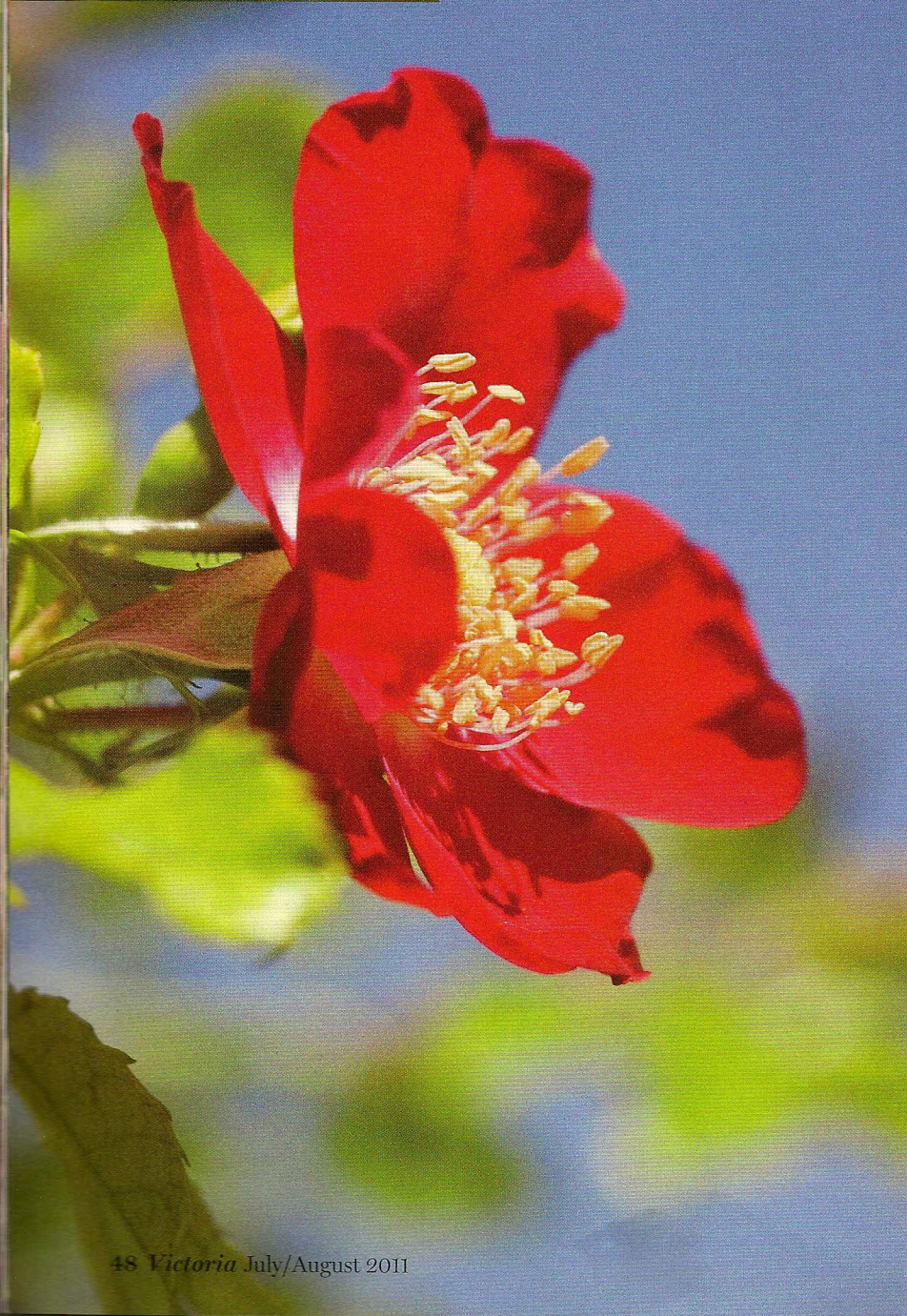


The forsaken floral denizens of deserted Texas homesteads and old cemeteries forever changed how G. Michael Shoup regards roses. The botanist, horticulturist, and landscape professional once considered them to be fussy flowers. But then he happened across antique roses that can grow for decades without benefit of human hands.

Cuttings taken from these forgotten blooms inspired Shoup to create the Antique Rose Emporium—a Texas-based retail and mail-order nursery that sells four hundred varieties of heirloom roses offering sweet nostalgia and intoxicating fragrances. An 8-acre display garden on the premises showcases the blossoms in gorgeous landscapes.

In 1984, Shoup joined the ranks of the Texas Rose Rustlers, an organized group of gardeners dedicated to rescuing abandoned roses (see “The Texas Rose Rustlers,” page 50). “It was an epiphany,” he recalls. “I learned that I was dealing with not overly bred roses that make excellent garden plants.”

Antique or old garden roses are not merely wilted flowers discovered in a neglected garden. The American Rose Society classifies them as varieties introduced before 1867. The boundary between old and modern, at least as far as the rose world is concerned, was delineated with the cultivation of ‘La France’, the first hybrid tea rose. This, and subsequent modern roses, produce repeat-blooming, high-centered blossoms. But these fabulous flowers came at the expense of disease resistance. The rescued roses of Texas prove that heirlooms can flourish without special care.





*Among the four-hundred-plus varieties for sale here are modern roses that are as easy to grow as their antique ancestors. Pictured opposite: 'New Dawn', top left; 'Livin' Easy', top right; and 'Dortmund', large photo, left, and also pictured above adorning the Texas ranch house that serves as the Antique Rose Emporium's gift shop and office. Vigorous 'Old Baylor' roses bloom near a greenhouse, left.*





## The Texas Rose Rustlers



They are a breed apart from the outlaws of the Old West. The Texas Rose Rustlers save; they do not steal. Armed with knowledge, dedicated and determined, these noble men and women have been protecting venerable roses from neglect or death for nearly thirty years.

Founded by the late Margaret P. Sharpe in 1982, this one-of-a-kind organization currently has approximately two hundred members, according to leader Faith Bickley.

"We go to cemeteries, abandoned farms, and backcountry looking for antique roses," she explains. "We take cuttings, grow them, and, when possible, identify them."

Rose rustlers, in addition to being enthusiastic, are polite. Their code of etiquette includes asking permission of property owners before cutting, as well as explaining their mission of locating and preserving antique roses. And, as any well-mannered person would, following the visit, they thank the owner by phone or letter.

Many of these found roses are sold through the Antique Rose Emporium (see main story, page 48). *V*





*Texans are rugged, and so, too, are the roses that grew on homesteads or graced cemeteries here a century ago. The Texas Rose Rustlers preserve classics such as 'Baronne Prevost', opposite, top left; 'Fortune's Double Yellow', large photo, opposite; 'Climbing American Beauty', left center; 'Will Scarlet', below left; and 'Climbing Pinkie', below. These varieties and more can be purchased at the Antique Rose Emporium, whose owner, G. Michael Shoup, breeds modern counterparts he calls "pioneer roses."*

