

Preserving Our Living Antiques

by Maureen Reed Detweiler

Nine years ago I set out upon a mission to preserve the antique roses, or Old Garden Roses, from extinction, to return them to the gardens of old New Orleans neighborhoods, and to introduce them to the newly developed gardens of the area. The mission was a pleasant one filled with hours of happiness meeting and enlisting new friends to work for the cause and inspiring old friends to take action. With joy and gratitude, I report that many who read my articles, attended my lectures, and politely listened to me at social gatherings now share my passion. One needs only to drive through the streets of the city to see that preservationists and gardeners have responded to the call.

Our work is not finished. I still receive many inquiries from those who are just beginning to learn about the cultivation and preservation of old garden roses. The questions most often asked are these:

What is an antique rose?

An antique rose, officially known as an Old Garden Rose, is one which belongs to a class which existed prior to 1867. Some of these Old Garden Rose classes are Alba, Gallica, China, Tea, Bourbon, Noisette, Hybrid Perpetual, etc. The first Modern Rose class, the Hybrid Tea, was developed in 1867. Other Modern Rose classes are Floribunda, Grandiflora, and Miniature Roses.

How can we preserve these Old



Why are Old Garden Roses desirable for my garden?

Unlike Modern Roses, Old Garden Roses thrive without heavy fertilizing, pruning, and spraying, as specimens found thriving without care from human hands in old abandoned homesites and cemeteries attest. The old plants have a beauty of form and rich old rose fragrance not found in modern varieties. They are completely versatile in the landscape. They will climb on trellises or cover fences or sheds. They will grow in pots on porches or balconies. Some are huge shrubs which can be used as hedges, and some are small for patio gardens. And they love to be mixed with other flowers in cottage gardens or free-form beds.

Will they grow in shade?

Most roses require six hours of sun per day. Some varieties of Old Garden Roses require only four hours of sun, and so will thrive in shady locations if the young plants are allowed to mature in full sun in large pots prior to planting in the ground in filtered sunlight or partial shade.

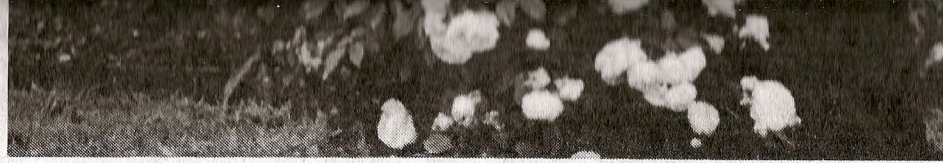
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How can we preserve these Old Garden Roses from extinction?

When an old rose of a rare or unknown variety is discovered on an old homesite or in an old cemetery, it is important that the rose be propagated according to the guidelines suggested by the New Orleans Old Garden



Author and antique rose enthusiast Maureen Detweiler poses with a specimen example of the climbing rose 'Clothilde Soupert.' Photo by Charlotte Haring.

Rose Society or the Heritage Rose Foundation. It is best to contact a person who is knowledgeable about rose preservation, and never, never try to relocate the rose.

Are all Old Garden Rose blooms small or single in form?

No. There are hundreds of Old Garden Rose varieties and cultivars available in commerce today. Some have huge, full-petaled blooms as we see in the old Dutch paintings. Others have small blooms borne in large clusters, and some flowers are single.



'Duchesse de Brabant' is an everblooming tea rose with large, medium-pink flowers on a large bush. Photo by Maureen Detweiler.



A medium-bush China rose that grows well in this area. 'Louis Philippe' has deep crimson blossoms throughout the year. Photo by Maureen Detweiler.

This article is from
Preservation in Print
the publication of the
Preservation Resource Center
of New Orleans.