

In the Company of Nobility

A rose lover visits a new North Texas heritage rose garden

Michael Shoup



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In the peaceful countryside north of Dallas, a fledgling rose collection has become one of four U.S. heritage rose gardens recognized internationally. The Heritage Roses Committee of the World Federation of Rose Societies recently named the Chambersville Heritage Rose Garden to its list of important worldwide rose collections.

At ROSEDANGO on Saturday, Oct. 11, the garden's founders will provide rose lovers with an opportunity to see the collection described in this article. The event begins with a rose seminar at the Heard-Craig Hall in McKinney in the morning and a picnic and tour of the tree farm and rose collection in the afternoon.

The event is free, but space IS LIMITED. You must make a reservation by calling 888-799-6832 or e-mailing roses@chambersvilletreefarms.com with your name and the number of attendees.

For those who can't attend ROSEDANGO, the tree farm and rose collection are open to the public most Saturdays. For map and directions see the web site, www.chambersvilletreefarms.com

HERE: Against a wooded North Texas backdrop, this garden in Chambersville provides elbow room for a collection of time-honored roses.

The pasture was teeming

with dignitaries from long ago. I walked slowly to take them all in. There was 'Archduke Charles', 'Napoleon' and 'Lamarque', along with the ladies, 'Duchesse de Brabant', 'Mlle. Franzika Kruger' and 'Lady Hillingdon'. I vaguely remembered some of these names from my world history class taken many years ago. The French were especially fond of naming their new roses after nobility and war heroes. I thought it was appropriate that they were planted on this grassy hillside so they could admire each other through the seasons. I was humored by seeing that 'Napoleon' was dwarfed by the voluptuous 'Duchesse de Brabant' planted close by.

More names emerged from the field: 'Maggie', 'Martha Gonzales', 'Caldwell Pink' and 'Old Gay Hill Red China'—study names given to roses whose original given names

have been lost in commerce while the plants are still found surviving in cemeteries and older neighborhoods. I fondly remembered Martha Gonzales, the lady who shared cuttings of her family rose with me. Now 'Martha Gonzales', since being registered with the American Rose Society, is a rose sold throughout the nation. It was nice to see her represented here.

The collection seemed endless as I strolled on. Every four to five paces there was another rose and I anticipated its name: 'Mamon Cochet', 'Rhodologues Jules Graveaux', 'Hermosa'.... The bushes were big, allowed to grow without pruning, and despite being planted 12 to 20 feet apart, they created imposing figures in the landscape.

A view to the east displayed dozens of sturdy trellises and tripods supporting vigorous climbers. Names familiar to me like 'Reve d'Or', 'Celine Forestier' and 'Madame Alfred Carriere' marked these giant cascading roses. I recognized

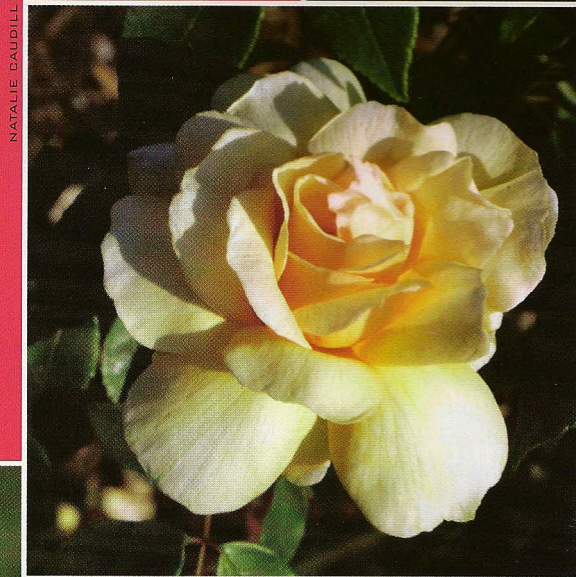


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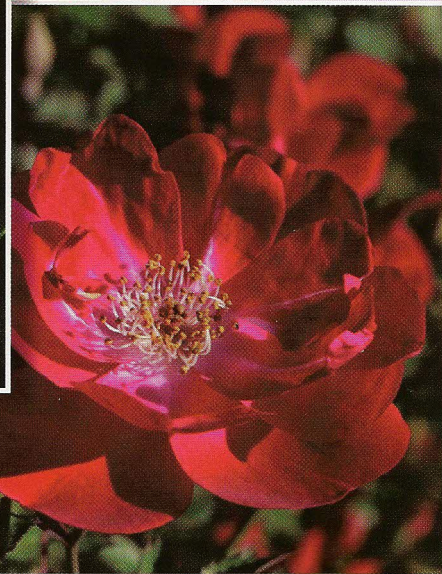


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CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: 'Carnation', a Bermuda mystery rose, named for its frilly-edged petals; 'Veilchenblau' (1909), a fragrant Rambler, sometimes called "The Blue Rose"; 'Martha Gonzales' (1984), a red Texas-found rose that has become popular for planting in masses and hedges; 'Monsieur Tillier' (1891), aka 'Archduke Joseph', an upright tea with very double blooms; and (center) 'Crepuscle' (1904), a late-blooming Noisette that is best trained as a climber.



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these climbers as the American-bred roses. In the late 1700s, John Champneys, a Charleston, S.C., rice farmer, crossed 'Old Blush', "the tougher-than-nails," ever-blooming China rose found throughout the South, with a wild musk rose, *R. moschata*. The resulting seedlings were the original Noisettes. No Southern home should be without them. Dramatic, romantic dripping fountains of fragrant roses set them apart from other climbers. Some are still

found surviving on old Southern plantations — true aristocrats. I picked a flower of 'Celine Forrestier' and took in its heavenly fragrance.

The 25-acre rose garden carved out of this 260-acre tree farm was the brainchild of Claude Graves. Claude has generously given much of his free time to the American Rose Society and the Heritage Rose Foundation. Both organizations are gloriously represented here. With this Chambersville Heritage Rose Garden, both the American Rose Society and the Heritage Rose Foundation possess a study garden, while the Heritage Rose Foundation establishes

a garden conservancy aimed at saving the gene pool of these roses.

The collection consists of 400 or so varieties that have been selected based on their acclimation to the South. Claude amassed the roses from numerous varieties of Chinas, Teas and Noisettes that thrive in Texas. We are fortunate to have these specific antique roses happily thrive here our state. They are not cold-hardy in Zones 6 and northward, so they are the envy of our Northern gardening friends. In Texas, they make fat, chunky plants with long bloom cycles. The more cold-tolerant varieties like Gallicas, Albas and Damasks struggle here and thus are not represented. Nor will you find the modern Hybrid Teas and Grandifloras that lack history and staying power. This garden is a world-class representation of the warm-weather roses typically originating in areas of China that are climatically similar to the Texas Gulf Coast.

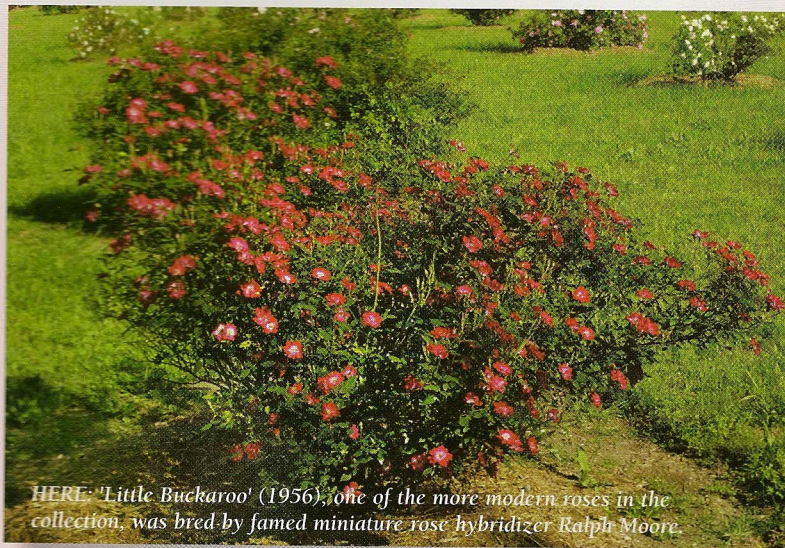
In addition, sufficient space has also been provided to display the Griffith Buck roses, the EarthKind™ roses, and EarthKind™ Brigade roses (new varieties still being evaluated for the EarthKind™ program) as well as the Pioneer Roses, my own breeding program of Texas-bred roses for Texas gardens.

The roses are not fertilized with synthetic fertilizers, nor are they sprayed with insecticides or fungicides. These roses, like the Earthkind™ roses, have to make it on their own. Even though these roses are only watered and mulched, remarkably few losses have been experienced, proof that they belong here.

The grand benefactor of this garden is Dean Oswald. Dean owns, and his son-in-law, Chad Simmons, manages Chambersville Tree Farm in Chambersville, north of Dallas near McKinney. From their busy nursery, they have carved out vistas, lakes and a garden niche that houses the rose gardens. Tractors and pumps can be heard in the distance, demands that a large tree farm extols. Still, the three-acre

lake, the forested backdrop and the park-like expanse on the slightly hilly terrain create the atmosphere that you should have brought your fishing pole or, if not that, at least a book allowing you the time to take in the bucolic surroundings.

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HERE: 'Little Buckaroo' (1956), one of the more modern roses in the collection, was bred by famed miniature rose hybridizer Ralph Moore.

Ultimately, though, it's the roses that speak to you. As you visit these gardens, you see roses that were once admired and cultivated by our early settlers. The roses' sheer tenacity and durability have allowed them to travel through the miles and the years to reach our modern gardens. Here we get a glimpse of the past. These roses still have uniqueness and most certainly an allure

that tie you to man's quest for beauty and history. They are the ultimate living antique — beautiful and diverse, much like the people and places for which they are named. **RSO**

About the author: Mike Shoup is a nurseryman and rose authority, as well as a legendary Texas rose rustler. He owns the Antique Rose Emporium, with display gardens in both Brenham and San Antonio. Visit www.weAREroses.com.