

# Antique Rose Show

INTERVIEW BY NÉALA SCHWARTZBERG ■ PHOTOGRAPH BY KENNON EVETT

The roses that grow in most residential gardens today are actually hybrid plants, bred for a particular color or other characteristics. But Antique Rose Emporium owner **George Michael Shoup** is more intrigued by the ancestral plants that existed prior to 1867, when the first hybrid tea rose was introduced. He sells about 300 unique varieties at his gardens in Brenham and San Antonio and via mail order.

**You call yourself a rose rustler. What is that?** Rustler conjures up images of someone doing something bad. But I do more of a search-and-rescue mission. I hunt for wild roses growing on roadsides and at abandoned home sites. I groom out invasive plants, prune the rose, and if it's healthy enough, take a cutting.

## What is an Antique Rose?

My Antique Roses, or Found Roses, are unclassified because, as far as I know, no American nursery has sold them for the past 100 to 150 years.

Sometimes we can trace them with old catalogues and other literature. This was the case with our San Marcos Red Rose,

which we named, then added to our catalogue as a Found Rose. We later saw it in a British nurseryman's catalogue listed as an Archduke Charles, dating back to 1837. So we changed our rose's name to Archduke Charles.

**What was your first find?** A rose called Mermaid. I used to run an ornamental nursery business near Marble Falls. In 1982, a coworker was taking a back road to the nursery and happened upon a huge rose bush covering a fence. It was full of flowers that looked like eggs sunny-side up. The bush was performing spectacularly in a completely neglected setting. We found pictures of Mermaid in a rose book that indicated it was introduced in 1918.

**What makes Antique Roses so special?** For the past 100 or so years, breeders have been trying to perfect big, showy flowers. But in the process, other endearing qualities, such as disease resistance and the diversity of form, have been bred out. With Antique Roses, the plant itself is of interest. They have forms and shapes that beg to be used in the landscape. They allow the gardener to be an artist. Plus, many Antique Roses have unbelievable fragrances. Fragrance is the soul of the garden. ✪

*The Antique Rose Emporium's display gardens in Brenham and San Antonio are open year-round. Family-friendly events at both locations coincide with the spring bloom throughout April. (979) 836-5548 and (210) 651-4565; antiqueroseemporium.com.*

