

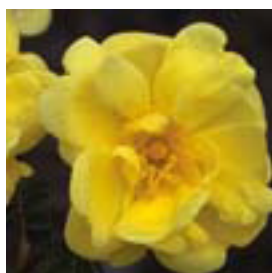
# Discovering Old Garden Roses

by Linda Campbell

This article was originally published 20 years ago, in the 1989 American Rose Annual. The roses Ms. Campbell talks about however, are timeless - and still available today to plant in your garden.

Linda was a two-term past President of the Denver Rose Society. She was also an ARS Life Judge and a Consulting Rosarian. Linda was involved in husband Bill's business, High Country Rosarium (now called High Country Roses and located in Utah, operated by Heather Campbell and her husband), that specialized in old garden roses. The excellent red rugosa rose 'Linda Campbell' is named after her.

Roses currently sold by High Country Roses ([www.high-countryroses.com](http://www.high-countryroses.com)) are marked with a "\*", winter-hardy issues for the Denver area are listed in [brackets].



Harison's Yellow

How I remember my grandmother's garden with each burst of spring! There were large beds of iris and perennials, but her pride and joy were the roses. *Harison's Yellow*\* filled one corner of the yard, almost the earliest flower of the season, with masses of golden bloom. The

bush was quite hardy and sat at the base of *R. Foetida bicolor*\*, which seemed to explode into bloom simultaneously with its flaming red petals reversed with yellow. Along the fence, *R. soulieana* plunged toward the ground in June. Trusses of dainty white flowers were set off by the grayish, rounded foliage. *Mrs. John Laing* stood quite stately by the porch, covered with large pink blooms until the fall. Its rich fragrance permeated the air and invited you to enjoy the clusters of bloom. Even more



Mrs. John Laing

imposing was *Paul Neyron*\*. The flowers had to be the largest I'd ever seen, and the bush flowered freely until the first frost. There were roses tucked in everywhere, and slips for new ones grew under Mason jars. You soon discovered that each was different and loved for its uniqueness.



R. Foetida bicolor

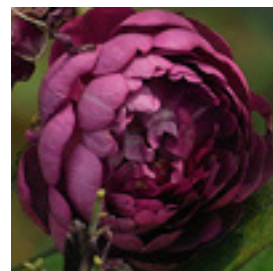
Often the first thought that comes to mind when discovering old garden roses is fragrance. The clear pink petals of *Autumn Damask*\* contain the scent so familiar in the attar of roses. Blooming late in the season, this was once the only source of autumn bloom. *Apothecary's Rose*\* will pique your senses with its spicy bouquet. A bright red rose with conspicuous yellow stamens, the fragrance is preserved in the petals when dried. The powder became a main component of many pharmaceuticals, foods and cosmetics in about the twelfth or thirteenth century. Seen only early in the summer, the moss



Comtesse de Murinais

rose, *Comtesse de Murinais*, holds a double treat in store with its very perfumed bloom and fragrant moss. Moss may feel sticky to the touch, but it leaves a delicate scent on your fingertips. One of the repeat bloomers with rich fragrance is *Baronne Prévost*\*, a flower with very classic old garden rose form and colored with opulent pink. It belongs to the old garden rose class of hybrid perpetual, the immediate predecessor to the hybrid tea.

Historically, species roses are the building blocks for all roses. It is small wonder, then, that every color found in our modern roses is also seen in the old garden roses. We find the palest of pinks in the splendid, translucent crinkled petals of *Celsiana*, and progress to the dark purple, almost maroon, of *Cardinal de Richelieu*\*. The 'Mad Gallicas' supply us with mauves, reds, deep pinks, and all of these in combination to form marbling, stripes and dots



Cardinal de Richelieu



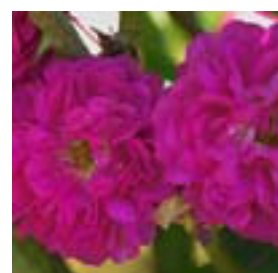
Celestial

as in the mottled petals of *Alain Blanchard*. *Mutabilis*\*, [marginal to not winter hardy in our area] a china, extends the ability of roses to change from flame orange at bud stage, to delicate yellow, to pink and even to copper in one bloom. *Frühlingsgold* is a prolific, golden yellow single encasing a tremendous shrub as one of the initial blossoms of spring. Color in stamens can set off the

tint of petalage even more. *Celestial* has few diaphanous pink petals with prominent golden stamens apparent when fully opened. The single, *R. macarantha's* five large unblemished white petals encircle long, bright, yellow stamens. *Hebe's Lip\** opens its creamy petals out flat to reveal remarkable stamens. The petals of this rose seem brushed on the edge with red. Not to be overlooked are the pip or button centers of old garden roses such as *Mme. Hardy\**, *Tour de Malakoff* and *Hippolyte\**. These centers tend to be a dusty light green, and the petals lie symmetrically distributed around them.

Interesting variety is also offered by stem and foliage. What pleasure to wander in the garden and brush against *R. eglanteria\**. The foliage is apple-scented, so it continues to bestow pleasure within the garden long after its early blooms fade. The upright quality and purplish red canes and foliage of *R. glauca\** make it an excellent background plant for your landscape. Its handsome hips

carry on its beauty throughout the winter. *R. macrophylla doncasterii* has a purplish green foliage with dark plum-colored stems. The deep pink blooms give way to large, red hips to extend its season. As for thorns of interest, *R. sericea pteracantha* has red, large wing-shaped thorns that are translucent. This dainty, white single is thought to be the only four petaled rose. A rather robust old garden rose is *De la Grifferaie*. The immense cat claw



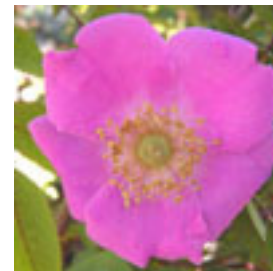
De la Grifferaie

thorns will grab you as you walk by. Foliose sepals protect the fat buds of *Bullata*. Crinkled, lettuce leaf-type foliage has made this rose renowned. Each leaf is large, dark and sometimes has a hint of red along the ripples.

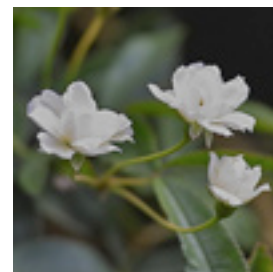
The unique moss roses are the only class of old garden roses not named on the basis of parentage. These are mostly sports of the centifolias and damasks, and they are noted for their peculiarity of moss-like growth on the stem of the flower, on the calyx, on the sepals and sometimes even on the leaflet. *William Lobb\** is a vigorous grower that can be trained to a trellis. It is nonrecurrent,

and the purplish blooms become grayed as they fade. One of the finest mosses is the striped *Oeillet Panachée*. It has strong color in its striping of deep pink and light crimson on white.

As for bush habit, you can find anything from the groundcover style of growth to that of a climber. *Rose de Meaux* is a centifolia, each minute bloom packed full of little petals and shaped like diminutive pompons. Its growth habit will be much the same as a miniature. For something close to hybrid tea habit, *Frau Karl Druschki* is a hybrid perpetual on an upright bush of about three to four feet. The pure white blossoms resemble the hybrid tea style also but are scentless. One of the most exemplary classical blooms of an old garden rose is found in *Königin von Dänemark\**, pink petals symmetrically quartering around a button center. The bush is sprawling at nearly five feet, with the heavy blooms arching the canes over gracefully toward the ground. *R. banksiae\** [not winter hardy in Denver] can climb to nearly twenty feet in a favorable climate and will be covered with white or yellow blossoms early in the spring. These canes can be trained upward, or allowed to undulate freely, draping a hillside as a groundcover.



R. macrophylla doncasterii



R. banksiae

Old garden roses come in every shape, size and color and **will** fit into your landscape. It's just a matter of discovering the right combination of plant and location. Experiment, and enjoy the charm, beauty and satisfaction that these roses have to offer.

*This is a reprint of an American Rose Society article. The ARS is over 100 years old, and membership contains more benefits than we can list here. To learn more, please check their website, [www.ars.org](http://www.ars.org).*

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A splendid collection of old and classic roses.

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