

The Accidental Arrival (Jun-1-2007)

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On a morning in June 1992, I peeled away damp newspaper from inside a package that had arrived the day before. The unmistakable scent of roses filled my office at Brooklyn Botanic Garden as pink petals fell to the floor from a fresh cut specimen of a rose simply labeled "Shipwreck Rose from Sag Harbor" with a note attached: "Can you identify this rose?" signed, Carol Olejnik, of Sag Harbor. A call to Carol filled me in with some interesting missing details: the rose grew in her garden for many years, originating from a cutting of a bush that had been in the family ever since April 13, 1840. Carol was able to give a specific date, since that was the day the packet, *Louis Philippe*, ran aground off of Mecox beach. One of Carol's ancestors was on the beach when the extensive cargo of champagne, furniture, and roses washed ashore. Her ancestor brought home this rose bush, and the fragrant pink blossoms have been filling the air of their June gardens ever since.

The *Louis Philippe* made regular runs from France to America, delivering plants, including the latest rose varieties, for the nurseries of New York and Philadelphia. What was on the ship at the time of the accident is not known, no records were ever recovered. However, two years earlier on April 13 there was an auction in Philadelphia of fruit trees and roses delivered fresh from France by the *Louis Philippe*. Over forty different varieties of roses were sold that day, roses with names like: *The French Boy*, *The King of the Purple*, *The Sultan Bone Turk*, *Eugenie Napoleon*, and *The Josephine Rose*. What ended up on the beach in East Hampton is not clear, but Carol's rose was unmistakably an old Dutch rose known as *Celsiana*, introduced into France sometime before 1732 and named for the Parisian nurseryman Jacques-Martin Cels.

This rose would have indeed been heading to New York on that fateful day. Over the years, several gardeners have approached me to identify their "Shipwreck Roses", but, with the exception of Carol's rose, all were not in existence at the time of the unexpected arrival of the *Louis Philippe*.

Among those I've examined were: *Dr. Huey*, a red climbing rose introduced in 1919 and named for a dentist from Philadelphia; *Dr. W. Van Fleet*, a blush pink climber from 1902; *Harison's Yellow*, a yellow shrub from 19th century Manhattan; and the ubiquitous *Dorothy Perkins*, a pink rambler from 1901. I'm still on the lookout for "Shipwreck Roses". No doubt, in an old garden somewhere in the East End, there are others growing that were rescued from Mecox beach and shared from generation to generation of gardeners. Old garden roses are survivors, they deserve to be grown in all gardens, and they're beautiful. Here's a selection of some recommendations of old garden roses that are excellent choices for the seaside gardens of the Hamptons.

Zéphirine Drouhin

Named for Zéphyrine (sic) Drouhin, the wife of an amateur horticulturist in Semur, France, this fragrant Bourbon rose has been popular in gardens world-wide since its introduction in 1868. Capt. George Thomas, amateur American rose breeder and author wrote in his 1924 book *Roses for American Climates* that Zéphirine Drouhin was an especially good rose for the seaside climate. If protected from the harsh winter winds, this fragrant beauty is perfect for arches, pillars, or a south facing wall in East End gardens. Despite recent claims that this 19th century hybrid can tolerate shade, I would recommend only full sun. In the shade, this Bourbon will become afflicted with black spot.

Furthermore, the more sun, the more likely it will rebloom later in the summer. Underplant the climber with blue-flowered perennials such as nepeta or campanula. The thornless canes make this an ideal candidate for covering an outdoor shower. Other Bourbons to consider (but be aware that they are all prone to black spot and I recommend companion plants such as nepeta Walker's Low to hide this sin) are: Louise Odier (pink), Mme. Ernest Calvat (pink), and Kronprinzessin Viktoria von Preussen (white).

Dorothy Perkins

This pink Rambler, introduced in 1901 was named for the granddaughter of George E. Perkins, who with his father-in-law A.E. Jackson formed Jackson & Perkins in 1872. Perkins had settled in Newark, a small city in upstate New York situated halfway between Rochester and Syracuse on the Erie Canal. His initial plan was to grow grapes and fruit trees, but with the area already saturated with this crop, roses became his successful venture. Dorothy Perkins established Jackson & Perkins as a serious rose nursery and became one of the most popular rambling roses ever created. This small flowered, pink rambling rose frames some of the oldest homes in the village of Southampton. The pliable canes make it a perfect candidate for training around arches and pillars. Dorothy Perkins has been used by some as a ground cover to help in erosion prevention of the sand dunes. Other ramblers are: Excelsa (red, similar to Dorothy Perkins), Bloomfield Courage (red with white eye, five petals), and Tausendschoen (various shades of pink, completely thornless).

American Pillar

American Pillar is a once-blooming climber that is found in great abundance throughout older gardens in Eastern Long Island and is often featured in photos of rose-covered cottages in Nantuckett and Martha's Vineyard. This salt tolerant and disease-resistant climber, introduced in 1901, displays enormous clusters of five-petaled, bright pink roses. Large rose hips are retained through the winter and the glossy foliage turns purple and red in the autumn. When protected from the direct blast of the ocean winds, American Pillar can cover great distances.

Dr. W. Van Fleet

Dr. W. Van Fleet is a large-flowered climber that was named in honor of the hybridizer, Dr. Van Fleet of Little Silver, New Jersey. Meant to be released with his other popular hybrid, 'American Pillar', the debut was delayed due to the fact that the nursery responsible for the release had lost their original crop due to poor greenhouse cultivation. Van Fleet himself provided the nursery, Peter Henderson of Jersey City, with new plants. Van Fleet's self-appointed name for this vigorous blush-pink climber was Daybreak. When introduced in 1902, Henderson changed the name to Dr. W. Van Fleet to honor the good doctor. In 1931, a repeat-blooming variety was introduced under the name of New Dawn, pushing Dr. W. Van Fleet to near extinction. Many original specimens of this old beauty still exist, one planting in particular is on the split-rail fence along Park Place in downtown East Hampton.

Mme. Alfred Carrière

Normally, I wouldn't recommend Tea-Noisettes for gardens in the East End. In general, the varieties from this class of roses are too tender for cold climate gardens, especially those near the ocean or open bays. There are a few exceptions to this rule one of my favorites is Mme. Alfred Carrière, introduced from France in 1879. One of my clients in East Hampton grows this large-flowered fragrant blush-white rose as a climber trained over arches, within a quarter of a mile from the ocean. Other Tea-Noisettes to try (winter protection may be

necessary) are: Alister Stella Gray (pale yellow-orange buds, open to white roses) and Fellenberg (blood red, small flowers).

Madame Plantier

For sprawling shrubs in the middle of the border, there are many choices of old garden roses to choose from. One of my favorites is the pure white once-blooming hybrid from 1835, Mme. Plantier. This Hybrid China was the result of an unrecorded crossing of a cold-hardy European rose with a rose from the China class. This sort of hybridizing was popular at this time, and the results of this work were once-blooming vigorous shrubs. Mme. Plantier is one of the first of these hybrids by Monsieur Plantier, of Lyon, France, one of the leading breeders of new roses of the 19th century. Named for his wife, this white shrub became popular as a free standing shrub as well as a pillar rose. In America, Mme. Plantier was a popular planting in the Victorian garden cemeteries. Easton Cemetery, in Aston, Pennsylvania, still has original plantings of Mme. Plantier installed over one hundred and thirty years ago. Tough, resilient, and beautiful, this rose has withstood the test of time and deserves a place in the most modern perennial border. Under plant this 19th century sprawler with tall growing alliums and spiked perennials such as foxgloves, delphiniums, and valerian. Other Hybrid Chinas recommended for the East End gardens are: Malton (red, tall growing), Duchesse de Montebello (blush pink, low and spreading), and Juno (very large flowers, light pink, sprawling).

Charles de Mills

Gallica roses are among the oldest of the old garden roses and the most durable for cold winter gardens. Noted for their rich hues of red and violet, these roses blend easily with all colors of perennials, annuals, and herbs. Charles de Mills is among my favorites of this group. It's sprawling habit and tightly packed purple roses look spectacular when spilling through a planting of alchemilla or along side silver foliage perennials such as Centaurea Colchester White. Other gallicas recommended for East End gardens are: Jenny Duval (cerise mauve, with various shades of pink, densely petalled), Apothecary's Rose (red-pink, loosely petaled, one of the oldest roses in cultivation) and La Belle Sultane (five petals, mauve).

William Lobb

Moss roses were the craze of the Victorian era the soft moss-like coating encasing the flower buds provided the source for the name of this group of roses. With various growth habits and colors ranging from pure white to the richest purple, there is a wide range of possibilities to choose from. One that does especially well in East End Old Garden Roses (continued Mutabalis)

In general, China roses are not reliably hardy in zone 6 gardens. One exception to this is Mutabalis, a China rose of uncertain origin that produces five-petalled roses with colors that range from cream to vivid scarlet instead of a dense shrub. Mutabalis grows as an airy small to medium-sized shrub with blooms produced on branches of various lengths. This rose is an easy rose to use in any mixed border, the color range in the flowers allows it to fit in visually with any color combination. As Mutabalis comes into its first bloom, I use tall alliums such as Gladiator or Globemaster as companion plants. Mutabalis' will bloom from June until there is a strong frost. With winter protection (wood chips mounded six to eight inches up around the plant) this rose, also known as the Butterfly Rose, will survive the winter.

The closest nursery with good quality old roses is Brookville Nurseries in Old Brookville. They sell large-sized roses, most of them are imported from Pickering Nursery in Canada. Or contact Pickering direct at www.pickeringnurseries.com. For own root roses, good sources are: Vintage Gardens (www.vintagegardens.com), Antique Rose Emporium (www.wearerose.com) or Roses Unlimited (www.rosesunlimiteddownroot.com).