

# *The Romance of Polyanthas*

By Jim Delahanty

The story begins with numbers. The numbers are:

25,000+

13,309

844

670

292

234

103

79

58

45

Modern Roses XI lists more than 25,000 roses. Updated to June 2003, R.G. Swerdt identified 670 polyantha roses listed by Modern Roses XI, plus those registered since the publication of Modern Roses XI in 2000. Some of the 670 extinct or effectively so since there is no record of the whereabouts, even by the hybridizer. Thus 'Dubonnet' (1958, dr, Jelly), seems to have been lost from commerce, although it may exist somewhere in a private garden; in the search for the 'missing' Ralph Moore roses, both 'Baby Mine' (1929, my), and 'Ruth Turner' (1941, dp), have been provisionally determined to be extinct to the extent that they are not even listed on the Sequoia Nursery website as being 'missing.' In any event, even 670 of over 25,000 roses does not begin to compete with the more than 10,000 hybrid teas created in a similar time frame of the last century and a quarter. In any case, 670 roses represent but 2.68 per cent of all the roses listed in Modern Roses XI. An even better indication of the regard in which polyanthas are held would be to note that the class has been referenced in the 1934 American Rose Annual as an 'accursed race.'

The Combined Rose List 2003 references 13,309 roses in commerce, including some 292 polyanthas, with some 58 representing 'found' roses, the status of which is best described as 'in limbo.' In some cases these 'found' roses, if accurately and definitively identified, will turn out not to be polyanthas; in others, they will turn out to be clones of already identified cultivars; and in an undetermined number of instances, they will probably be left 'unidentified' because they are chance seedlings devoid of commercial or authoritative identities, whatever personal charm they may individually possess. Of the 234 recognized varieties, 103 may only be purchased outside the borders of the United States and Canada; another 79 may be purchased in both North America and the rest of the world, and 45 may only be purchased in North America. If the 'found' polyanthas are distributed in accordance with the preceding rubrics, the totals would be: 119, 80, and 85. (The mathematically inclined will note a deviance of 7 in the totals representing entries where no commercial outlet was indicated.) Vintage Nursery in Sebastopol, California offers no less than 16 or more of the 'found' roses listed in CRL2003.

There remains the figure of 844. This represents the number of polyanthas produced by a search at [www.helpmefind.com](http://www.helpmefind.com), an invaluable resource. The number is inflated by the inclusion of variable names for certain polyanthas ( e.g., 'Yellow Cecile Brunner' for 'Perle D'Or'). It is also inflated by the repeated problem of classification ills. Polyanthas have been plagued from the start with imprecise nomenclature. Through the history of this class of roses, the problem has been compounded by the instrumental role of the polyantha in the creation of floribundas, not to mention miniatures, ground covers, patio roses, shrublets, and landscaping plants. The terms 'poly-pom,' 'dwarf polyanthas,'

‘polypompom,’ and ‘hybrid polyanthas’ have also been used to describe polyanthas. Unfortunately, all of these terms are still in use today in one venue or another.

Briefly, classifiers have made use of the notion of a true polyantha to refer to the early creations of crosses between *R. multiflora* and roses possessed of china rose remontancy which produced short, compact floriferous bushes with continuous blooms of clusters suitable for masses of plantings, edging, front of the border plants and hedges with the added bonus of hardiness. These characteristics were muted as more and more crosses were made with tea roses, ramblers, climbers, foetida, and other china roses. These characteristics disappeared as crosses between the original polyanthas and hybrid teas produced larger bushes, with larger clusters, greater color definition and more resemblance to the hybrid teas rather than the polyantha heritage. To differentiate these roses from the earlier ones the rose authorities coined the term ‘hybrid polyanthas;’ and though a more unuseful and uneuphonious term could not have been created, it sufficed for a couple of decades until Dr. Nicholas of Jackson and Perkins resuscitated the term ‘floribunda’ for the polyantha /hybrid tea crosses. From its original coinage in the mid 1930’s to the conversion of all the labels in the pictures in the 1952 American Rose Annual, the debate as to the appropriate use of terms raged; needless to say, the more marketable term won. Roy Shepherd in his ‘History of the Rose’ attempted to retain the usage of hybrid polyantha to differentiate the earliest short crosses compared with the distinctive later crossings of polyantha with tea (Mlle Cecile Brunner, lp, Ducher, 1881), but the term fell out of general usage. Even so, it is still used today in the catalog of the San Jose Heritage Rose Garden to designate roses that are (usually) first generation crosses between polyanthas and Hybrid Teas, generally somewhat shrubbier than the subsequent Floribundas. Polypompom and its variants are used by Beales and Graham Stuart Thomas in references to early polyanthas, but the term seems to have fallen into disfavor along with its reference to the use of tufted balls to adorn curtains, lampshades, and nonfeathered boas. Indeed, the use of the term polyantha for the already named *r. multiflora* was an error; and the error was compounded by the use of the term for one roses to include any other cluster-flowered roses. The error, however, became the reality of classification and as Oliver Wendell Holmes has noted, an ounce of history is worth more than a pound of logic.

Today the term polyantha includes the original multiflora x china crosses, the crosses of the early polyanthas with teas, foetida, wichuranas, ramblers, some dwarf versions of large climbers, (White Pet, a sport of *H. sempervirens* (Felicite et Perpetue) ‘Baby Alberic,’ a seedling of ‘Alberic Barbier’), and a slew of roses the origins of which are simply unknown. The color ranges run the usual gamut of roses from white to mauve with particular representations of white, pink and red, with lesser numbers of yellow, orange, and mauve. ‘Baby Faurax’ seems to represent the outer range toward a purple red in the polyantha family; so far no polyanthas features a russet color or designation. In size and growth pattern, Vintage Gardens suggests on its website that there are five distinctive growth and flower patterns ranging from the early polyanthas of small clusters of flowers and growth under two feet, to the somewhat larger bushes up to four feet. The strengthening of the multiflora influence led to much larger bushes such as ‘La Marne (1915, dp, Barbier), which can grow to six feet or more. Finally the line of influence from the ramblers produced bushes of five feet with more defined basal breaks and triangular clusters of flowers. Tea-influenced polyanthas like Cecile Brunner maintained a more candelabra type of bloom pattern with foliage far below the blooms but with more tea like branching in the growing. Thus, whatever the intentions of the classifiers, the eventual development of the polyanthas seemed to bear out the originator’s observation that the group demonstrated all of the possible forms and types shown in roses up to the date of the appearance of the polyanthas in the last quarter of the 19th Century.

## Origins:

A statement on the origins of the polyanthas most resembles a multiple choice answer sheet in the game of Clue. In 1860 or 1862 Robert Fortune or Jean Sisley sent seeds of *R. multiflora polyantha* to Sisley, or Sisley's son, or the mayor of Lyon or someone else in the Lyon area. In February of 1869 Jean-Baptiste Guillot reported that he had reaped plants 'which contained all the forms and colors of current roses.' Presumably, the crosses which yielded remontancy occurred in crossings with China roses, in the second or third generation of crosses. *R. multiflora polyantha* was an odd sort of parent. At least according to Harkness in 'Roses,' it was the most unprepossessing of parents; he regarded it as the 'least attractive' of the wild roses, with honey scented clustered blooms that blew quickly on short stems with a tendency to bloom late in the season.

The earliest polyanthas were white 'Paquerette' (My Daisy), and pink and white 'Mignonette' (Sweetheart). 'Paquerette' was introduced in 1875; the flowers were white, double, unscented, about an inch across, and appeared in clusters, with leaflets ranging from five to seven in number. The short and bushy plant tended toward an upright growth pattern. 'Mignonette,' although appearing contemporaneously with 'Paquerette,' was not introduced until 1881; the flowers were double, pink, white, and mottled or splotched pink on white, with serrated, glabrous foliage. In both cases the flowers were of lesser importance than their appearance in combination with others to form the massing effect. While 'Paquerette' only produced a total of 121 descendants, 'Mignonette' amassed a total of 6670—nearly a quarter of all the roses up to date; the reason for this largesse is because 'Mignonette' parented 'Gloire des Polyanthes' in a first generation cross and grandparented the formidable "Mme Norbert Levavasseur" in the second generation cross. .

Bright pink colored roses appeared with 'Gloire des Polyanthes' in 1887; red in *Perle des Rouges* in 1896, and ten different tones of coppery red in *Leonie Lamesch* in 1899. Two years ago Ralph Moore noted that the secrets of the polyanthas had yet to be released, as he believes that the genes of the polyantha can be carried in many different classes of roses. Recently genetic research indicated that the pelargonidin (orange) gene first appeared in 'Gloire des Polyanthes' in 1887 as opposed to the conventional wisdom which ascribed them to 'Paul Crampel' of 1931. Yellow ('*Etoile de Mai*' 1893) and mauve tones ('*Magenta*' 1916) would occur fairly early in the scene as well.

## Tea Rose Crosses:

The first quarter century of development would be characterized by crossing the original polyanthas with tea roses. And one of the earliest crosses would produce arguably the most beloved and enduring of the polyanthas, 'Mlle Cecile Brunner' in 1880. The tea rose involved was conventionally designated as 'Mme de Tartas,' or possibly 'Souvenir d'un Ami,' both pink teas. The rose produced carries multiple light pink blooms on candelabra type settings high above the foliage. Each bloom is almost a perfect replica of a traditional tea rose in a reduced form, perhaps under 2 inches across, with a touch of yellow in the center of the bloom. The bush is thornless with 3 to 5 leaves, compact, disease resistant, about two feet tall and wide, and utterly charming. This rose has been inducted into the World Federation of Roses Hall of Fame honoring roses that have endured and continue to delight people over the years. Given such pleasant characteristics, the rose has also produced a climbing version, a white version, a dark pink version, and a spray version. The latter is about four times the size of the original and features wild sepals tilting at an angle up away from the bud, and appearing always to be fluttering in a breeze. At one time the spray version was thought to be a rose called 'Bloomfield Abundance,' but recent research indicates that 'Spray Cecile Brunner' is a sport of 'Mlle Cecile Brunner.' The enduring popularity of this rose can be indicated by the fact that over 80 nurseries list 'Mlle Cecile Brunner' in the 2003 Combined Rose List; while a full 87 list the climbing version; and 40 nurseries list the spray

version as well. There are even two faux versions of 'Mlle Cecile Brunner.' One is 'Pasadena Tournament,' aka 'Red Cecile Brunner,' actually a cross of 'Cecile Brunner' and an unknown seedling; the other is Perle D'Or (see below), frequently referred to as 'Yellow Cecile Brunner' although the two plants do not share an identical tea rose background. The ubiquity of 'Mlle Cecile Brunner' is such is that it is a polyantha most likely to be obtained at a Target or Walmart.

'Rita Sammons' resembles 'Mlle Cecile Brunner' in every way but constancy of color, as it is a 1926 sport. The color is a deeper pink with less volatility. Many of the polyanthas would show an incredible inconstancy of color, bleaching in the sun, showing variable colors as changeable as the weather, and not averse to sporting. The benefit of a notch on the color palette could be offset by the undesirability of an unacceptable color in the middle of a massed planting, one of the primary uses for the polyanthas. 'Lady Ann Kidwell' evolved through a cross of 'Mlle Cecile Brunner' and an unidentified seedling. Introduced by Marsh Nursery in 1948, the rose is generally low growing albeit upright in growth pattern (although I have seen a fifty year old plant growing up the side of a wall to the first story eaves with a width of nearly six feet). The buds are pointed, elegant and long in a deep pink or bright red color and open to a starburst or quilled pattern looking vaguely like the bow on a gift package. The foliage is widely glossy, widely spaced and the blooms retain the Brunner habit of floating above the foliage and the tea habit of nodding slightly on stems just slightly short of the strength to carry them securely. In 1953 Shepherd produced 'Lullaby,' a cross between a seedling of R. souleana and Mrs. Joseph Heiss times 'Mlle Cecile Brunner.' Unlike either Brunner or Kidwell, this rose produces clusters of loose white flowers with an inflorescence suitable for entering in rose show classes and is popular on Southern California show tables; it occasionally proffers a green button eye in the middle of some 50 petals in a bloom. The plant is small, with glossy leathery foliage and slightly fragrant.

The same cross that produced 'Mlle Cecile Brunner' also produced 'Anne-Marie de Montreval' in 1879, yielding a small bush with glossy foliage on the upper leaf and a gray green color below. The bloom is a pure white, but small, about the size of a thumbnail, with very variable opening patterns. The clusters of four or more blooms resemble nothing so much as a collection of little pearls with no guarantee that the stamens will ever show. There is a lily of the valley fragrance although it does not seem to be overpowering or even evident to some people.

'Perle D'Or' (1884), as noted, resembles Cecile Brunner in many ways; however, the blooms are about an inch across in clusters of anywhere from five on up, and the silky petals curve backward as they open to a softer color than the original bud orange with an occasional splash of red. This rose is highly fragrant and disease resistant as well as being virtually thornless. It can attain four or five feet without difficulty with rich green foliage. It came from a cross of an unnamed polyantha and Mme Falcot, a tea rose of nankeen yellow. The first generation crosses of this rose included the climber 'Phyllis Bide.'

'Clothilde Soupert' appeared in 1889, a cross between 'Mignonette' and a tea rose, 'Mme Damaizon.' When it opens, there are soft white 2-inch flowers with gradually pinkening centers and a sweet fragrance, again with foliage sited below the clustered blooms. The habit of not opening, however, leads to bull noses, browned petals and other disturbing characteristics, but when it is at its best, it justifies all of the disappointment 'Pink Soupert,' a seedling of 'Clothilde,' possesses exactly the same characteristic difficulty in opening.

'Marie Pavie,' or Parvie, or with a conjectural hacek Pavic, had no definitive or specified parentage. Generally, it will remain a short 18 inch by 18 inch plant. Some authorities believe that this rose shares more characteristics with Chinas than with the polyanthas, but generally, it is classified as a polyantha. However, there is a stand of these roses in the Hundred Acres Park in Chatsworth that grow to shoulder

height; they flaunt scented, white blended roses with ivory cream centers amid rich foliage of 5 to 7 leaves. The ivory cream tones may reflect the 'Safrano' background. The rose produced a pink sport after one hundred and eleven years without one, 'Marie Daly.' Marie Pavie was also the pollen parent of 'Katharine Zeimat' (1901), a small but vigorous grower when unpruned with 20 to 50 white blooms in clusters atop rich and dark green foliage. Reputedly, the centers blacken quickly in California, making it something less than effective for show purposes.

Rambler influences: The mixture of polyanthas with ramblers brought both more complexity to the polyantha class, as well as more enduring popularity. But it also introduced characteristics that would become fatal in the long run; the greater the array of colors, the less disease resistance seemed to be available. While the early polyanthas could boast of being relatively free of blackspot or powdery mildew, these afflictions began to pop up in the new developments. And the characteristic of sporting worked against the primary purposes for the welcome to polyanthas; that is, instead of being able to rely on a massed effect of color that muted the individual flowers, sporting tended to point up the unsuitability of particular or individual flowers. A blaring magenta cluster in the middle of a massed plantings of the peach colored blooms of 'Marytje Cazant' tends not to present a restful vista.

'Mme Norbert Levasseur' appeared in 1903, a cross between 'Crimson Rambler' and 'Gloire des Polyanthes.' 'Crimson Rambler' shot fifteen to twenty feet in the air. The newly minted rose stayed small, around 15 inches or so. There were two major disadvantages to maximizing the popularity of 'Mme Norbert Levasseur': one was the existence of a name with 8 syllables, seven soft consonants and a catarrh like resonance; this was solved by a clever American marketer who condensed the original name to four syllables: 'Red Baby Rambler.' The other problem was that the medium red color blued badly at the end of the bloom cycle. Nevertheless, "Mme Norbert Levasseur" engendered 31 first generation crosses as well as a total of 6, 624 descendants.

Some popular roses stemming from 'Mme Norbert Levasseur' would reveal a characteristic sterility that effectively established a dead end in development. Thus, 'Excellenz von Schubert,' a 1909 cross between 'Mme Norbert Levasseur' and 'Frau Karl Druschki,' the classic white Hybrid Perpetual—for decades the standard of a white rose-- produced no descendants, although the light grape colored clusters of flowers on a medium sized shrub or short climber with dark green foliage were particularly attractive. The blooms tend to start late in the season and to continue longer in the fall than many others. There also seem to be two similar roses offered in commerce, one being closer to lilac pink in its color palette, the other being more to the pink end of the scale. 'La Marne,' a mating of "Mme Norbert Levasseur" with the china, 'Comtesse du Cayla,' has produced only one descendant since its 1915 debut. 'La Marne' will grow to six feet tall if not pruned, but, luckily, the pruning does not affect its tendency to exhibit single pink blend blooms almost continuously. It also shows the tendency to fade to white in the extreme heat you might find in Texas or Southern California valleys and deserts. The rich foliage is especially resistant to powdery mildew. .

The most important descendant of 'Mme Norbert Levasseur' would be the seedling, 'Orleans,' appearing in 1909. 'Orleans' presented geranium or rose red flowers that held their color well, unlike the parent plant, fading to carmine rather than bluing. The flowers have a small white center, are semi-double, and are framed by glossy foliage.

The most important characteristic about 'Orleans,' however, is that it sported with a promiscuity worthy of some 22 direct sports and an equal number for indirect sports (a sport of a sport, e.g. 'Marytje Cazant,' a sport of 'Jessie,' a sport of "Orleans.") These sports were among the most popular of polyanthas in the ensuing two decades. More ominously for the fate of polyanthas as a class, however, was the mating of 'Orleans' with 'Richmond,' a Hybrid Tea to produce the first floribunda, 'Rodhatte,'

in 1912 by Poulsen of Denmark. This would eventuate in many crosses of hybrid teas with polyanthas to produce a group of roses that would become floribundas and ultimately overwhelm the polyanthas as a class.

In 1917, 'Orleans' sported to 'Miss Edith Cavell,' a rose bush with a brilliant dark red color and huge trusses of blooms that achieved a carpet effect in massed plantings. Not only was it shade tolerant, but unlike many of the sports, it produced a slew of offspring, eventually totaling some 6198 in number. 'Miss Edith Cavell' appeared like a comet upon the rose scene, in that the hybridizer de Ruiter reported that he produced over 80,000 rose bushes in something like a year and a half in order to flood the market with this rose. From that pinnacle of success, it retreated to an undeserved obscurity to the point that in 1985 only one gnarly bush of it could be found in the garden of a Norfolk octogenarian to replenish the supply of the rose and rescue it from obscurity.

Despite the great floriferousness of the rose, it is difficult to show inasmuch as the stamens of the first blooms in a spray tend to blacken before the other blooms open. However, it does have the virtue of blooming reasonably well in shade. Among the direct descendants of 'Miss Edith Cavell' is a 1921 rose called 'Ideal,' with a garnet red color but with such an unfortunately predilection to mildew that it could be used as a marker for mildew in a Southern Californian garden, like canaries in coal mines. . In 1919 Matthias Tantau produced two roses based on seedlings of Orleans. One was a short rose bush of peach colored single blooms in medium sized clusters—'Schoene von Holstein' that has produced no descendants. The other was a brick red mottled tea rose form bloom on a larger mid size bush; the blooms tended to appear singly or in small clusters of two or three, called 'Stadtrat Meyn.'. Neither, according to Jack Harkness in 'Roses,' was particularly successful. Nor did either produce any offspring.

One sport of 'Orleans' introduced a new color to the polyantha class—'Coral Clusters,' variously described as orange/pink or pink/orange. Another crimson sport of 'Orleans,' 'Superb' featured crimson blooms and two years later that sport produced 'Gloria Mundi,' which produced clusters of orange vermillion flowers as well as some 80 descendants. 'Gloria Mundi' in turn sported to 'Paul Crampel,' which actually evidenced orange blooms both brighter and larger than those of 'Gloria Mundi.' The orange was sort of a day-glo color that led to conventional wisdom that 'Paul Crampel' was the source of that color in modern roses classes. Another sport of 'Superb,' 'Golden Salmon' appeared in 1929, with a tendency to produce orangish blooms, but with a high reversion rate to crimson; this tendency was so evident that one evaluator in an American Rose Annual referred to the color as 'tiresome.' Finally, in 1932, 'Orleans' sported to 'Cameo,' a combination of coral, orange, and salmon colors with the neat habit of self-cleaning but a susceptibility to mildew. Few of these sports produced significant offspring or even very many offspring with the exception of 'Gloria Mundi' with 489 descendants. Most of them stayed within the growth pattern of two feet high by two feet wide. The exciting developments were within the color range rather than any other particular factor, but the increased disease factor led to a development dead end in most cases.

A few other descendants of 'Orleans' are worthy of note:

---'Mevrouw Natalie Nypels,' introduced in 1919, was a cross between "Orleans' and a cross of 'Countess du Cayla and R. Foetida Bicolor; the resultant small bush provided medium sized pink blooms with significant fragrance as well as speedy repeat bloom. Botanica's Roses notes that this is one of the best of the polyanthas and it received a Royal Horticultural Award of Garden Merit in 1993. It sported to 'Nypel's Perfection' in 1930, a rose with even greater vigor, and larger hydrangea pink buds and flowers.

--'Mrs. R. M. Finch,' was a cross between 'Orleans' and an unknown seedling; The flowers are medium rose pink on a shortish bush. What distinguishes this rose is that the flowers are cupped in clusters. There are only a few descendants of this rose and none beyond the second generation. Steve Jones reports that this roses does not do well in Southern California rose shows, apparently because the judges do not like it.

--'Henrich Karsch,' was a cross between 'Orleans' and 'Joan,' a hybrid musk. This cross yielded a plant with mauve offspring, a new color in this particular development although nearly mauve colored plants had been introduced before in the polyantha group, most notably 'Verdun' by Turbat in 1918. Both 'Verdun' and 'Heinrich Karsch' require regular spraying in order to prevent the onset and permanent occupation by powdery mildew.

### The Koster line: The Sporting Life

A line of roses evolved from 'Tausenschoen' (Thousand Beauties, 1906), a hybrid multiflora with both multiflora, Hybrid Perpetual (General Jacqueminot), and polyantha ('Paquerette) in its background. 'Tausenschoen' sported to a dwarf form, 'Echo ' in 1914.' This rose presented rose pink flowers with white eye centers, but the form of the flower was unlike either the pompom form of the early polyanthas crosses with chinas or the later crosses with teas that produced neat and tidy replicas of that class. The bloom pattern was rather with a wider base and the outside petals curved up to form a bowl-shaped effect. The rose was virtually thornless and had long lasting vase capacities. Some of its descendants could last up to a week in water without losing eye appeal although suffering some slight deterioration over the time span. This is another of the 'traveling' roses through classifications. In authoritative books that appeared in the 1990's the 'Echo' was variously identified as belonging to the multiflora , polyantha, cluster flowered, or china groupings. Currently the ARS designation is as a Hybrid multiflora. The pigmentation also seems to possess a certain instability, not unexpected given the propensity to sport..

'Echo' sported to 'Greta Kluis, (a carmine red polyantha) in 1914, which in turn sported to a deep red version, 'Anneke Koster,' in 1927. 'Anneke Koster', in its only act of producing progeny in the first generation sported to 'Dick Koster,' a deep pink version of 'Echo.' By the time 'Dick Koster' and its sports were complete, there would be nearly a two and a half dozen roses of varying colors including white, orange, salmon, light red, dark red, deep pink, light pink, rosey pink and a yellow blend. Almost all of these roses would be short, compact plants with twiggly growth, initially good disease resistance, and good vase holding power. Of the twenty Koster roses the most popular and enduring would be 'Margo Koster,' an orange-red bloomer, with a propensity for more intense color in cooler weather. 'Margo Koster' would have six sports of its own, including 'Margo's Sister' (light pink) and 'Margo's Baby,' a light yellow version. The latest of the recorded 'Margo' sports would be 'Summer Dawn,' a rosy pink version which appeared in 1950. And additional short line of sports from Dick Koster produced 'Mothersday, (1949)' and 'Father's Day (Vatertag, 1956), dark red and orange sports with double globular flowers as opposed to the bowl shaped Koster, dwarf growth, and glossy foliage. There was also a tendency toward powdery mildew in many of these sports as the colors became further removed from the original pink and white. Moreover, this line of development did not proceed further as the sporting life did not appear to present opportunities for crossing with other plants to produce new flowers.

While 'Echo' produced some eighty descendants, most of the Koster and Mothersday sports would not promote further development of the line.

‘The Fairy’ and its progeny:

By far the most popular of all polyanthas in purely commercial terms is ‘The Fairy;’ it is offered for sale in nearly half of all the 303 nurseries listed in the Combined Rose List of 2003. It is the most likely polyantha to win a trophy on the show table. Its appearance in the commercial market of today can be in any number of guises denoting its use. ‘The Fairy’ appeared in 1931, a product of a cross between ‘Paul Crampel,’ the polyantha, and ‘Lady Gay,’ a rambler cross of *R. wichurana* and the Hybrid Perpetual ‘General Jacqueminot.’ The *wichurana* would contribute low growing arching canes with a profusion of salmon pink flowers as well as dark glossy disease resistant foliage. The colors in ‘The Fairy’ would fade in the heat; in fact, it would be so climate responsive that a dozen photographs of the rose at [www.helpmefind.com](http://www.helpmefind.com) would reflect almost a dozen different shades of color. Unlike the Kesters, ‘The Fairy’ would be used extensively for hybridization by almost all of the great 20th century breeders; like other polyanthas it would sport as well, but its productivity was not restricted to that effort. There would be over 40 different first generation crosses and sports from this rose. A series of ten polyanthas would be produced using ‘The Fairy’ as the seed parent and ‘Yesterday’ as the pollen parent; ‘Yesterday’ was a 1974 Harkness rose that combined strains from ‘Phyllis Bide,’ a climbing polyantha of incredible vigor and continuous light salmon and yellow conical buds and flowers on short stems, ‘Shepherd’s Delight,’ a medium red Floribunda, and ‘Ballerina,’ the great pink and white Hybrid Musk; ‘Yesterday’ was named for its slightly old fashioned and Victorian look to its lilac pink clusters of single blooms. Of the ten crosses, four remain in commerce, but only one is available in more than a nursery or two—‘Fairy Dance,’ a medium red ground cover. Sports and crosses of ‘The Fairy’ have yielded roses placed in rose classes as disparate as polyantha, floribunda, shrub, and miniature. Many are commercially grouped as ground covers, patios, and shrublets.

Two interesting ‘Fairy’ crosses came from Paul Jerabek: ‘Wee Butterflies’ and ‘Zenaitta.’ ‘Wee Butterflies’ was a cross of ‘The Fairy’ and an unidentified seedling, perhaps self-crossing. The rose featured single pink petaled roses with white eye centers in clusters of three to three dozen against a background of light, mid-green foliage on a very small bush. This rose came close to winning kudos in the AARS rose trials in 1980, scoring the highest total of 31 roses—but in the miniature class; it was withdrawn after maunderings that it was not really a miniature. Entered later as a polyantha, it scored very few points for quality; it was released as a polyantha in 1989. ‘Zenaitta,’ a 1991 release, presents small red double flowers with small white centers in clusters of up to 90; however, they bloom in succession and require careful pruning to maintain a fresh appearance. The bush can get large and unmannerly and it has problems with powdery mildew in Southern California although it won top honors in the polyantha class at the ARS Fall Convention in Washington, D.C. The parents of ‘Zenaitta’ are ‘The Fairy’ and either the famous miniature ‘Starina’ or a floribunda, ‘Fire King.’ The name was determined by an auction in which the winner named the rose for an old friend. The frequency of the name occurrence is one in seventeen thousand.

Oddities and Unknown parentage:

A few polyanthas seem to have been designated such by being dwarf or smaller versions of larger parent plants. As early as 1879, ‘White Pet,’ a short sport of ‘Felicite et Perpetue,’ a hybrid *Sempervivans*, acquired the designation of polyantha. ‘Baby Alberic’ is a smaller sport of the well known rambler. And ‘Baby Faurax’ has been described as a sport of the climber ‘Veilchenblau.’ In a sharp blow to the theory that ‘less is more,’ Jack Harkness referred to Baby Faurax as a ‘short and stumpy ugly’ rosebush.

In 1918 Turbat produced ‘Eblouissant,’ a delightful tiny rose with long-lasting red color, double, globular flowers nested in bronze foliage on a very dwarf plant. One of the parents of this rose was the

old china rose 'Cramoisi Superieure;' the other was an unknown seedling or a 'Bengal rose' whose identity has been lost. In 1929 Burbage used 'Eblouissant' in a cross with 'Coral Cluster,' which resulted in 'Britannia,' a short plant with red blooms with white eye centers. In a 1980 introduction Lens of Belgium used 'Britannia' to create 'Anda,' a rose with single 5 petals of dark red with a white eye, that blooms in clusters of up to two dozen blooms; it has purple prickles and the bloom form is quite unusual, resembling nothing so much as the unfolding of a tiny box in the opening of the petals. The other members of the cross in the breeding include 'R. Moschata,' 'Little Angel,' and 'Europeana.' The rose has only been recently introduced into the United States and won Best of Horticultural Class at a recent show in Arizona.

Three Australian polyanthas from the hybridizing of Alister Clark, display no polyantha characteristics whatever in their recorded breeding. However, 'Mary Guthrie,' with almost daylily shaped pink blooms, and single scalloped fragrant petals, 'Marjory Palmer,' quartered and heavily petaled with a delicious sweet scent, and 'Mrs. Alstons Rose,' with reddish pink, double blooms, may have qualified on the basis of short stature. Other polyanthas of recent years may show minimal polyantha characteristics in their recorded breeding. "Polly Sunshine,' from Ralph Moore, of the known heritage, only shows a ten per cent affinity for the polyantha designation; 'Red Fairy,' a cross of 'Simon Robinson,' and an unnamed seedling, indicates that of 26 parents, only 7 were polyantha related; and 'Fair Molly,' an unnamed miniature cross with 'Fairy Moss' shows that only 6 of 60 known relatives were polyanthas. In these cases, it is most likely the polyantha was the class of last resort. That the alternatives were less suitable than the polyantha class. Of course, the other half of the unknown cross may contain more polyantha heritage. Additionally, Mr. Moore believes that if a rose exhibits the characteristics of a polyantha, it deserves that designation whatever the recorded parentage might be.

In creating 'China Doll,' Lammerts, crossed 'Mrs. Dudley Fulton,' a polyantha, with 'Tom Thumb,' a miniature, expecting miniatures in a broader range of colors than available; what he got was a mid size plant with pink flowers of 24 petals with light yellow centers in large trusses amid five leafed foliage. The next generation of 'China Doll,' did not produce the expected miniatures either, but rather 'Pinkie,' a bushy plant with fragrant pink roses of 16 petals, and the only polyantha ever to win an AARS designation (in 1948).

Finally, there are those polyanthas whose parentage is totally unknown. These would include such old time polyanthas as the previously mentioned 'Verdun,' a small plant with neat and tidy clusters of lilac pink, and such recent introductions as 'The Gift,' with dozens of clusters of single white two inch blooms against mid green foliage in clusters of half a dozen blooms, or 'Karine,' single pink and white flowers in numerous clusters at the end of short stems and nearly continuous bloom all year around in mild climates. 'Too Cute,' nickel sized blooms of pink and pink and white in clusters of forty or more, suffered from the indignity of having field rats eat the identifying tags and its parentage is thus unrecorded until some future of genetic studies..

Polyanthas and respect.

The oft-repeated Peter Schneider epigram to the effect that 'polyanthas get no respect' need not be belabored to any great length. Polyanthas from the beginning performed functions that were ancillary: massed plantings for color, covering the bare knees of more favored Hybrid Teas or Hybrid Perpetuals, small hedges for edging or demarcation. As such even in the days of their apogee, polyanthas were hardly accorded a great deal of attention. In his 1903 book of 150 pages on rose culture, 'Beautiful Roses,' John Weathers allots a scant two pages to polyanthas as a subheading under the care of

Multifloras although he does muster a baker's dozen list of polyanthas for consideration. In the 1920 edition of 'The Practical Book of Outdoor Rose Growing,'

George C. Thomas, Jr. places one polyantha among the best 48 roses; unfortunately that rose is 'Gruss an Aachen,' which is no longer considered to be a polyantha. The rest of the polyantha class is confined to a page out of the 233 pages and 99 color plates. In the American Rose Annual of 1933, Editor J. Horace McFarland wrote that the 'old type of polyantha must be discarded' and the small flowered variations of 'Orleans' and 'Baby Rambler' were 'foredoomed.' In the 1952 American Rose Annual J. Armstrong noted that the 1951 Armstrong Catalog carried none of the polyanthas it had offered in 1932.

In 1947 California Nurseries operated by John Barneveld offered 22 polyanthas in its La Puente based operation; just seven years later the total had been reduced to 13. Even Roy Hennessey who railed against the adoption of the term 'floribunda' as late as his 1961 catalog only carried 8 polyanthas, (some of which he would only sell in groups of three or six so as to maximize their visual impact—or sales). By the 21st century, polyanthas in commercial catalogs have been divided into more useful categories by function rather than class designation.

Thus, Otto and Sons in Moorpark list 'The Fairy,' 'Red Fairy,' and 'Lovely Fairy' as Landscape roses. 'China Doll' is accorded a place among the Old Garden Roses listing. In the Heirloom Roses 2004 catalog 'Mlle Cecile Brunner' merits an OGR listing, 'Cassie' (Snowbelt) is carried as a shrublet, and 'The Fairy' is identified as a shrub, emphasizing its ground cover qualities.

Even as the production of putative and designated polyanthas seems to be double the number of polyanthas produced in the first quarter century of its existence, it is clear that the taxonomic integrity has foundered for reasons of commerce or convenience. It is unlikely that the term 'polyantha' would be restored to a position of honor that it really didn't possess in the first place. While the needs that welcome the polyanthas in the first place—those ancillary functions of camouflage and foreground cover—remain as necessary as ever, the need to alert the buying public to roses which fulfil those needs are much more likely to be found in commercial terms like shrublets and ground covers. This seems to be particularly a case where the function designation will intensify as people reduce the amount of time, space and effort accorded to roses unless the roses be relatively free of demanding anything more than benign neglect in the course of a season.

More pessimistic souls assume the approach of roses that are basically disposable annuals. Polyanthas will fill that bill as well whatever name they may be called.

It is heartening that the offspring of 'The Fairy' result in roses classed as miniatures, floribundas, polyanthas, and shrubs, and designated by function as ground covers, shrublets, patios, and whatnot. It indicates that the polyanthas will not disappear; they will merely go undercover, the better to survive in a commercial world.

\*\*\*A note on sources: Some of the sources are indicated within the text, e.g. Harkness' 'Roses.' Naturally, invaluable resources such as 'Modern Roses XI,' edited by Dr. Thomas Cairns, 'The Old Rose Advisor,' by Brent Dickerson, and the excellent article by Robert Martin, Jr 'The Modern Polyantha,' in the 2000 American Rose Annual edited by Steve Jones, were consulted repeatedly. I should like to pay special tribute to the resources available at [www.helpmefind.com/roses](http://www.helpmefind.com/roses) for the data on ancestries and descendants. And, of course, none of these worthies is responsible for any errors of fact or interpretation; I can do that on my own.

JD

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