

Ventura Rose

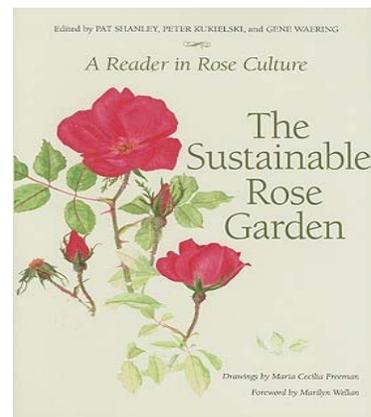
Volume 18, no. 1 January, 2012

The January meeting of the Ventura County Rose Society will feature a presentation by Pat Shanley, District Director of the Empire State District of the American Rose Society. Her presentation is entitled: 'Skyscrapers, Roses and Sustainability.' The program unites several concerns, including the need to engage in sustainable gardening, and to reinvigorate volunteer associations as a means of securing that goal. For the past six years, Pat has been chair of the American Rose Society Committee on Membership/Marketing.

'The Sustainable Rose Garden: A Reader in Rose Culture' was co-edited by Pat Shanley, Gene Waering, and Peter Kulkielski. In the collection of articles illustrating the various aspects of sustainable rose gardening are two by members of the VCRS—Jeri Jennings on 'Secret Garden Musk Climber' and Jim Delahanty on 'Hennessey Revisited—Sustainability or the Accidental Environmentalist.'

Pat's concern for the reinvigoration of the volunteer rose societies is expressed in her stewardship of the Manhattan Rose Society, which thrives on responding to the interests of the membership as expressed in popular activities and focuses less on traditional means of expression. She is also a leader in the popularization of the Great Rosarians of the World-East which reprises in June the activities of January at the Huntington Botanical Gardens.

Pat is also a candidate for the American Rose Society Vice President; the election is to be held this summer.



Desiderata.....January 2012

DUES:

Dues are due. Household dues for the Ventura County Rose Society are \$20.00 a year. Please send a check for that amount to Earl Holst, VCRS Treasurer at P.O. Box 102, Agoura Hills, CA 91376. This year as an added inducement all members who re-up will receive a free copy of Dr. Thomas Cairns' booklet on 'Growing Beautiful Roses.' This booklet, sponsored by the Rose Hills group, is an authoritative and concise primer on growing roses.

GREAT ROSARIANS:

Great Rosarians XII will honor Alain Meilland, the owner of Meilland International. Meilland Roses have been innovators and a major force in rose exploration and development for over six generations of family management. The event will stretch over two days—January 21st and January 22nd. On Saturday the 21st there will be a two hour symposium on Sustainable Rose Gardening at the Huntington Botanical Gardens from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. in the Teaching Greenhouse. On Sunday the program will shift to Friend's Hall directly opposite the Gift Shop. The Meilland presentation will start at 2:00 p.m. although there will be presentations and speakers in the morning as well. Tickets for the event are priced at \$50.00 a person and include both days as well as a box lunch on Sunday and a reception immediately after the Meilland presentation. Tickets may be purchased by sending a check to The Huntington Botanical Gardens, 1151 Oxford Road, San Marino, CA 91108 Attn: Great Rosarians. For more information, please write Clair Martin at clairgmartin@mac.com.

CONSULTING ROSARIAN SCHOOL/SEMINARS:

Mountain View Rose Society will host a Consulting Rosarian School and Seminar on Saturday, March 10th at Fairmount Park in Riverside. For more information on this event write Diana Kilmer at originalsbydiana42@verizon.net. Las Vegas Rose Society will host a Consulting Rosarian School and Seminar on Saturday, February 11th at the Las Vegas Golf Club in Las Vegas. For more information in this event contact Jackie Jackson at JJDJ53@aol.com. For information on the requirements to become a Consulting Rosarian contact Dawn-Marie Johnson at dawn-marie03@dslextre.me.com; Dawn-Marie is the VCRS Chair of Consulting Rosarians.

PACIFIC ROSE SOCIETY ROSE AUCTION:

The 'granddaddy' of all southern California rose auctions will be sponsored by the Pacific Rose Society on February 4th at Ayres Hall in the Los Angeles Arboretum starting at 10:00 a.m. for the Silent Auction of rare and unusual potted roses and 12:30 p.m. for the Live Auction of bare root roses from Weeks, Coiner, and Star. Over 500 roses will be auctioned off, including many of the latest releases from the great rose nurseries. For more information, contact Chris Greenwood at crisgreen1@aol.com

The Garden in January...2012

The January garden this year requires attention to water distribution. A dry December has been followed by a dry January and the prospects that the weather pattern will change for the better seems to be diminishing. This means that regular watering must be resumed to the extent dictated by the abnormally low humidity and desiccating winds from the east. Pay particular attention to container plants because the margin for error is significantly reduced. If good drainage helps when it rains, it also represents a negative when dry winds prevail. **Barbara Osterberg in Oxnard** notes that the sun seems to have direct access to cooking the roots of plants in containers when the weather produces Santa Ana winds. **Jim Delahanty in Sherman Oaks** notes that with a hundred plus container roses on the deck and patio, there is more hand watering going on than he would like this time of the year.

Otherwise, January is a month when planning, planting and pruning occupy most of the attention of rosarians. The planning aspect of January takes on at least two dimensions. While most authorities cite the optimal pruning time in southern California as the stretch of time between Thanksgiving and Valentine's Day, **Dan Bifano in Santa Barbara** believes that bare root roses must be planted before the end of the this month in order that they have plenty of time to develop roots and establish their presence. He also believes that the optimal pruning time is between January 15th and the end of the month. The application of dormant sprays and sulfur within a week of completing the pruning is advisable; if sulfur is hard to obtain, copper may be a substitute, but take any precautions recommended. The completion of the tasks requires more than dedication, it requires a block of time depending on the number of rose bushes present in the garden. **Elda Bielanski in Thousand Oaks** finds her garden daunting this time of year; the amount of work to be done and the amount of time available seem to be direct conflict. Elda has adopted the sensible rule of breaking the tasks into their smallest components in order to overcome the paralysis associated with complicated tasks and insufficient time: she has decided to prune and clean up two rose bushes a day.

Janet Sklar of Northridge plans to donate 'World War Two Memorial Rose' to the Veteran's Home Rose Garden in Saticoy (contact member Peggy Black if you have a suitable contribution) and to try 'Perfume Delight' in her mother's rose garden. These moves are part of a plan to introduce some new roses into her garden including 'Peter Mayle' (on the advice of **Dawn-Marie Johnson of Moorpark**) and 'Cubana' (purchased at the September Celebration of Roses). Barbara Osterberg believes that either her garden or her own self has matured enough to experiment with 'shovel pruning' in recognition that space is at a premium.

Pruning is considered to be the major activity this month. This month's feature article concentrates on observations about pruning. But it should also be noted that many people do not. Barbara Osterberg is not able to resist the lure of tidying up her garden after an experiment with not pruning; but she has not abandoned the notion of 'not pruning' entirely. But, still, she cannot

resist removing ugly and diseased leaves and other spontaneous reactions, resulting in fingers with prickles and coffee transferred from cups to clothing.

Of course, not everyone is into the program of planning, planting and pruning. **Robert Neil Rippetoe** of Palm Springs notes that it is a good time of the year to bareroot roses, transplant them, prune, defoliate and dormant spray; however, he also notes that he rarely does any of these tasks because he is busy with others that entice him more—like hybridizing and assessing seedlings.

Five Observations on Pruning Roses

By Jim Delahanty

More people exhibit angst about pruning roses than growing them. And, otherwise sensible people invest more time, trouble and research into pruning roses than in seeking a mate. Demonstrations on pruning roses are so popular and valued that some groups charge fees for attending such events. The distress and anxiety with which many people approach pruning is not inexplicable. The problem is not with the rose, but the pruner. Below are a few considerations to tame the psychological pruning beast, at least over the next few months.

First. Roses are tough. The anxiety over pruning is a confession of personal inadequacy, not one of any inadequacy of the rose. Roy Hennessey, plantsman extraordinaire of the middle of the 20th century, headed his newspaper columns with the observation that you could do ANYTHING to a rose, except grub it up out of the ground and leave it there, and it would thrive. This is pretty much true. Pruning roses within an inch of their lives does not prevent them from recovering and blooming; a famous award winning rosarian in southern California never pruned his roses at all. A prominent Bay area rosarian spends five seconds on each rose with his chainsaw. Roses have been in existence for over 35 million years and in most of that time, no one pruned anything unless the forest were burned to a crisp, nature's rather non-specific pruning method.

Second. Much of our pruning has evolved because of human concerns, not because of the need of the rose per se. While some roses need to be pruned to stimulate growth—particularly root growth—others are yearlong bloomers and resent interference in their bloom cycle. 'Secret Garden Musk Climber' blooms twelve months out of the year in my garden; any pruning is a matter of confining it to the space allotted to it, and it certainly doesn't need rejuvenation.

Sometimes we prune our roses in a particular way in order to promote a congruity between peak bloom time and particular rose shows, like district rose shows in April, particularly if the roses are modern ones like Hybrid teas, floribundas or miniatures. Or we may prune because we have misplaced a rose when planting it and have to keep cutting it back lest it completely and fatally

block a path and injure someone, or worse yet, scratch the paint job on a new car. Sometimes we prune for aesthetic or artistic reasons. There is a rose, 'Santa Catalina,' planted on a grey fieldstone wall at the Roseraie de l'Hay in the Val de Marne, south of Paris, that blooms in increments of about six inches—a tribute to the pruner's art, since it involves encouraging and suppressing bud eyes all along the canes in question. In another section, the rose bush is contorted into the shape of a shamrock. Since no one has yet filed a suit on behalf of the rose in any known court of law, presumably the rose does not care in either case. But we do. It is the fact of our concerns that elicits much of the drive to prune roses.

Third. The only constant in pruning is to remove dead wood and criss-crossing branches. Once you have accomplished that task, you have completed your pruning chores for many roses. You are done. Stop. Do no more. Many chinas and polyanthas require no more. You may choose to do more for any of the reasons listed above, or for idiosyncratic reasons of your own, but the rose doesn't care.

Fourth. Pruning time in mild climate Southern California is traditionally between Thanksgiving and Valentine's Day. It is the time of the year when the roses are least productive, when many of them shed their leaves, and succumb to the vicissitudes of dead and dying foliage (rust, mildew, and general miasma). But, in fact, pruning takes place all across the calendar in the fullest sense of the word, with the removal of spent blooms, blind shoots, and/or dieback of canes. As E.B. Le Grice pointed out in 'Rose Growing Complete,' in a mild climate, roses may be pruned at any time of the year. Given that it normally takes about six weeks between flushes of bloom, a second flush of blooms appropriate for a rose show requires pruning in the first month of the year here in southern California as opposed to some other choice. But if you are not going to exhibit in rose shows, you can pretty well pick a time available to you. Once again, you are free to choose—unless you have some pressing concern like a wedding that requires roses at a particular time. But if you do, be aware that your pruning concerns are driven by exogenous concerns, not those of the rose.

Fifth. Roses resemble individuals in being difficult to squeeze in a box (either those of a physical sort like some of the 'body bags' found in the supers or intellectual ones for convenience in consideration). And when you consider that a half dozen species may have contributed to the development of a particular rose, it is no wonder that individual roses have individual cachets. 'Brandy,' for example, dislikes being hard pruned and will sulk if treated that way. 'Niles Cochet,'—or whatever is the identification of a rose purchased as 'Mme Jules Graveraux'—is a climbing tea rose that negates the normal rule that tea roses pout if hard pruned. If I didn't hard prune it, it would strangle several neighborhood dogs, not to mention the postman. And it continues to pump out hundreds of blooms most every month.

The person pruning a rose has an obligation to find out what particular characteristics define the individual rose in the garden. For example, at the San Jose Heritage Rose Garden there are four different clones of the same 'Rosette Delizy.' Although each one is clearly 'Rosette Delizy,' the differences are also clear; some are more vigorous than others, while the color is more pronounced—even gaudy—in others. Finding out the personal characteristics of your roses is not a matter of consulting books, or even reading VCRS newsletters. It is a question of observation and assessment while working in the garden. It also dictates what kind of advice might be given to others.

I once waited five years for 'Dupuy Jamain' to bloom and never pruned it in that time span. For that reason I never recommend it to anyone for a home garden unless the individual someone wants a rare and unusual rose of great beauty, powerful fragrance, and relentless vigor. The rose is comfortable with itself. The trouble begins and ends with the gardener. So, take your valium or Xanax, reserve the Demerol for post-operative pain, and let the pruning begin.