



HERITAGE ROSES IN AUSTRALIA

Illawarra/Southern Highlands
Region

NEWSLETTER

May 2021

Snippets Pretty frosty of late here and the garden is starting to shut down. Roses, though, are still showing some colour, the strongest performer in my garden is Mrs Fred Danks. Who are the best late season performers in your garden?

There are 2 attachments sent with this newsletter. Many thanks to Susan Wade and the Sydney Group for allowing us to use the Pruning article. The second is the first of a series of articles on species Roses from our own Richard Walsh. Many thanks Richard.

THE VARIEGATED ROSE

Alexandra Blackman

Whilst living in Melbourne before the 90s we were lucky enough to be part of a small group of rare plants and roses enthusiasts. At the time Stephen and I were renovating a small workers' cottage (c1857) in Richmond that we christened 'La Mignonette', which was in the shadow of Epworth Hospital. The cottage once belonged to the farrier to the grand old house where the Hilton on the Park Hotel in East Melbourne now stands.

*We shared a beautiful 15 metre brick boundary wall (c1890) with a factory next door. In spite of our hesitation at the time, this magnificent wall was to become the perfect canvas for climbers such as **Souvenir de la Malmaison, Lady Hillingdon,***

Blossomtime, Cecile Bruner, the white and yellow **banksias**, **Mme Gregoire Staechelin, Gloire de Dijon, Sombreuil, Celine Forrestier** and the list goes on. Our **Wedding Day** rose extended itself right around the boundary fence of the property providing a perfect security system.

Being our first home, Stephen and I became passionate renovators. We couldn't afford power tools, so everything was done by hand with inherited antique devices. We also salvaged lots of building materials through the Trading Post or builders' yards, but that's another story. As our living conditions improved, so did our small garden.

Whilst at University, I formed a life-long friendship with a rose enthusiast whose garden in Hawthorn was filled with old roses. The perfume was simply intoxicating. Her somewhat large Victorian home was festooned with climbers. Roses like **Alberic Barbier**, mingled with the common clematis **Montana** and embraced an ancient flowering peach tree. Her garden was a romantic unstructured rose lover's paradise. It was an eye opener for me to witness such glorious disorder. My friend took me on this journey of discovery and introduced me to serious collectors of rare plants and roses. Their passion and enthusiasm were addictive. I gladly joined the hunt around derelict and abandoned cemeteries for cuttings of many old roses that survived long after they were no longer tended. It was such fun.

Melbourne's soil is mainly clay. Our garden thrived as did my passion for roses. Progressively, the garden that started with **Souvenir de la Malmaison** swelled to over 100 roses. Ross Roses were our providers. David Austin roses were unheard of. We certainly didn't limit ourselves to just roses though. We were often given rare plants to nurture and ensure their long-term survival. We also planted a few fruit and nut trees and were lucky enough to taste our first home grown avocados called **Bacon** that produced close to 100 of the tastiest and enormous fruit in its first season which also coincided with our final year in Melbourne. We even grew **Muscat** and **Waltham Cross** grape vines that were sheer luxury for those alfresco lunches under the pergola. All this is on

1/8-acre property!

As our home renovations progressed, so did my love of roses. It became an obsession. Our small rose collection expanded rapidly as did my curiosity for striped and variegated roses, tulips, fritillaria and even those wild pink and white striped ixias. They created such pretty contrasts in the flower beds.

Although nature is the best artist, everyone can be an artist with flowers especially when the subjects themselves are so varied. It is not difficult to create an irresistibly romantic bouquet of roses even in the humblest of containers. However, when the simplest arrangement can be enhanced with the help of a few sprays of the more unusual, then the visceral pleasure takes on an even more magical essence. To me, the addition of a few stems of variegated roses can turn the beautiful into the heavenly.

*At 'La Mignonette' I pursued my fascination with these charming bi-coloured roses and planted the gallicas **Camaieux** and **Rosa Mundi**, the Bourbons **Variegata di Bologna** and **Honorine de Brabant** and the hybrid perpetual **Vick's Caprice**. At times, I even wore a bud of one of these lovely roses in a lapel pin. They always turned heads.*

*Once we moved to Sydney, we wanted to bring our garden with us and we purchased around 40 roses from Ross Roses again however, this time we were so disappointed because very few of them thrived in the salted humid air. Only a few survived in the end and **Variegata di Bologna** was one of them. Sadly, the new owners wanted more running space around the pool for their dog and children and most of my treasured garden was converted into a paved surface.*



(above) **Variegata di Bologna** – our last rose standing in Sydney.



La Fillette. *The added charm of many variegated roses is that every flower is different. Sometimes they can be vulgar in their intensity (not here though) whilst other blooms just blush with hints of colour. So sweet.*

*Today, I am happy to say that we have three variegated roses in our garden in Exeter and one of them, found at Serenity, is Richard Walsh's **La Fillette** (The Little Girl) which sits so prettily by the back door in dedication of my special granddaughter Mimi. This rose is a happy abundant flowerer and the pink is in soft contrast against the white. In my opinion, she bears a close resemblance to **Rosa Mundi** and looks terrific on her own or as a charming addition to a mixed bouquet. I simply love her and would gladly grow her as a hedge behind a white picket fence. We also have another Richard Walsh rose called **Parcher** which I intend to give more prominence to next year and exchange places with my less preferred **Papagenio**. Variegated roses come in a variety of colours and tones. I have always been drawn to the pink and white varieties but there are so many other beautiful and interestingly painted varieties and, in my opinion, rose enthusiasts should experiment with at least one or two.*

Whilst in Sydney, our passion for roses eventually gave way to more appropriate plants but it wasn't until we moved to the Southern Highlands that our interest in heritage roses and their progeny was rekindled. This time, Stephen and I have more time to smell the roses together.

Roses at Harpers Mansion

Celsiana

Introducing another French Jacques - this time Jacques Philippe Martin Cels (1749-1806). He was born in Versailles and when his job as a duty collector at the gates of Paris was abolished following the French Revolution, started a botanical garden in which he cultivated and sold foreign plants. The Cels nursery became a family affair, with Jacques succeeded by his sons and grandsons. It is likely one of these who acquired the rose from the Netherlands, where its origins are unknown, and named it after Jacques.

Described and recommended by Heirloom Roses as a light pink Damask rose with golden-yellow stamens and a strong fragrance, it is a low shrub up to 1.5m tall.



What's happening at Roses and Friends – a small group of us are now going through the 'TLC' process, weeding the pots, repotting where needed, etc to get them looking their best in spring. Also Brian has ordered roses to boost stock. All this with a view to having a good selection of Roses for sale at the Harpers in Bloom event in November.

The committee

*Coordinator – Peter Rezek 0413 153 650,
prezek15@gmail.com*

*Secretary–Brian Wiseman 0497 755 666
bwiseperson@gmail.com*

*Treasurer –Gwyneth Watson 0417 244 485,
cannycot@gmail.com*

Newsletter Editor – Peter Rezek

*Committee–Intan Kallus,0481188 529
hkallus@optusnet.com.au*

*Committee –Suzy Dowsett,0432 245 529
suzydowsett@gmail.com*

