

BIRTHING THE HYBRID TEA

*“O, gather me the rose, the rose, while yet in flower we find it,
for summer smiles, but summer goes, and winter waits behind it,”*

William Ernest Henley (1874)

When we read the history of roses, we find there are many classes of roses. Starting with “Wild Roses” our first roses on Earth; in this group we have two most famous the “Rosa Arvensis” a white rambler found by the roadside and in our old cemeteries and “Rosa Banksiae Alba” (Lady Banks) which is still today a very popular rose. This rose covers banks and hill sides with a profusion of color in the Spring, blooming only once. It also comes in a yellow name “Banksiae Luta”.

The popular classes we have in our gardens today can all be traced back to the many “OGR’s”. But this class being oh so beautiful in its spring bloom time, lacks the sought after repeat bloom we experience today with our Modern roses.

Between OGR’s and our Modern roses is a most interesting and fun group of roses classed as “Hybrid Perpetuals”. In 1820 these roses were hybridized with Bourbons, Portlands and Gallica roses that were crossed with the Damask Perpetual roses. Wanting more from this class, in 1860 the hybridizers tried Bourbons crossed with China and Tea roses; resulting in a very successful repeat blooming, very tall upright, very fragrant bush with large, cupped flowers.

This was a very exciting time in the rose field as more and more Victorians became interested in exhibiting and the “Hybrid Perpetuals” were the exhibitor’s first choice for their gardens. Not finished yet and wanting more than just a garden rose, hybridizer, Henry Bennett, used the Tea rose to develop a better rose with a

perfectly formed center worthy of the “Head Table” at rose shows. His results birthed the “Hybrid of the Tea Rose”, hence the famous “Hybrid Tea” leaving the well known Hybrid Perpetual behind.

H.P.’s are limited in color showing mostly white, pink and crimson. There are no true yellows or oranges in this class. They are cold hardy and also do very well in the South. Starting in the spring, we have a beautiful May, June bloom with sparse blooming in summer, then a nice final bloom time in fall. This class of roses requires more water and fertilizer than our Modern roses. H.P.’s are prone to fungal diseases when temperatures are high making the garden hot. So, a really good spray program will be needed to successfully grow these roses. Pruning is the same as with Hybrid Teas and Floribundas or the bush will become lanky which reduces repeat blooming. Nevertheless, H.P.’s are most fun to grow making shapely shrubs, adding grace and style to your garden.

If you are looking for a group of really strong fragrant roses, Hybrid Perpetuals would be a nice addition to your garden. Besides strong entertaining fragrances, they sport intriguing names; “Mrs. John Laing”, “Reine des Violettes”, Mme de la Roche-Lambert” and on and on. Have some fun and look them up.

Hybrid Perpetuals were brought to America by our Fore Fathers, many of whom served in our first Government. Just think they were America’s first rosarians. Fascinating isn’t it, the rose world?

In my garden I have four H.P. bushes, the ones mentioned above and “American Beauty”. Next year I am adding “General Jacqueminot” the flower of my sorority, Alpha Omicron Pi.

These roses can be bought from Pickeringnurseries.com in Canada.

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