

RogersRoses

The World Federation of Rose Societies Conservation Committee

By Helga Bricet



The shrub rose
'Helga Bricet'
photographed by
Lilia Weatherly

In an introductory chapter to *Modern Roses XI*, published in 2000, a brief history of the World Federation of Rose Societies' Conservation Committee and its offspring, the Specialized Conservation Committee, was traced. The former came into being during the 1994 Roseworld Convention in New Zealand with the aim of seeking out rare and historically important roses and ensuring their survival for future generations of rosarians, be they amateur or professional.

At the 1997 Benelux Convention it became clear that the WFRS is an ideal vehicle by means of which to establish an International Rose Data Base. In November of the same year the Specialized Committee met for the first time at St. Albans where it was decided to entrust the technical merger of individual databases already in existence to the experts concerned. The large, historical collections at Sangerhausen in Germany and Cavriglia in Italy assured their support and all WFRS Members were asked to participate in a joint project of information gathering in their countries. All Vice Presidents became responsible for collecting the data made available in their areas where each National Rose Society would be responsible for the construction of its portion of the world's rose puzzle.

During the subsequent two years the Committee met annually to review all incoming material and add it to that already contained in the previous numbers of *Modern Roses*. The results of those three years work were published as "The World Encyclopaedia of Roses" (*Modern Roses XI*).

Since the 2000 World Convention in Houston, Texas, the Specialized Conservation Committee has decided to augment the rhythm of its work and now meets biennially. Winter meetings are hosted at the RNRS headquarters while the summer meetings have become itinerate and thus give members of the Committee the opportunity not only to admire rose gardens in Sangerhausen, Cavriglia, L'Hay-les-Roses and Baden Baden to date, but also enjoy the company of their curators and gardeners and get to know the smaller, local gardens which might contain hidden treasures.

Recently two additional aspects of rose conservation have come to the fore – namely the multiplication and distribution of rare varieties and the positive identification of roses of dubious or multiple names.

Comparative studies of the inventories of the large European conservatories have brought to light the fact that in the collection of some

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The repeat flowering banksian rose 'Purezza' Photographed at the University of Santa Clara in San Jose California

7,000 varieties belonging to Prof. Fineschi at Cavriglia, around 600 are unique, that is, to be found only there. The Botanical Garden in Rome, alerted to the urgency of the matter, has this summer initiated the removal of bud-wood of those varieties created by Italian, Spanish and Portuguese breeders.

Similarly, bud wood of rare varieties collected in Cavriglia and grown on in England is made available, without cost, to gardens recommended by this Committee. In order that rosarians in North America might too share the responsibility and joy of ensuring their survival, the U.S. nurseryman Paul Zimmerman, a member of this Committee, will import all these varieties for propagation and even wider distribution.

At the beginning of this year I was contacted by representatives of the Flower Festival Commemorative Park in Kani City, Japan, which already contains that country's largest rose garden, interested in visiting the "living museum" in Cavriglia. They were so impressed that an agreement was reached between nurseryman Hiroaki Ohno and Prof. Fineschi whereby bud wood of 1,000 varieties per year would be transferred to Japan for the next three years. At the same time generous assistance to the upkeep of the private Italian collection is guaranteed. In September of this year the first of these transfers took place.

The second aspect, which has recently come to a head, is that of the positive identification of varieties by means of DNA testing. At the moment the Committee is preparing a programme in this sense and we have been most fortunate in having the generous support of the laboratories for micro-molecular biology and phyto-chemistry of the University Claude Bernard in Lyons headed by Prof. Maurice Jay.

In order to have as complete a picture as possible of our rose-world's incredible mosaic, the Specialized Conservation Committee needs the help of all who understand the importance of this project. Should you know of, or have created, a rose which is not listed in Modern Roses XI, please fill in the descriptive form published in 'Modern Roses XI' page IXX and send it as indicated on the form to the Registration Authority at: The American Rose Society, IRAR, PO Box 30,000, Shreveport, Louisiana 71130-0030, USA.

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