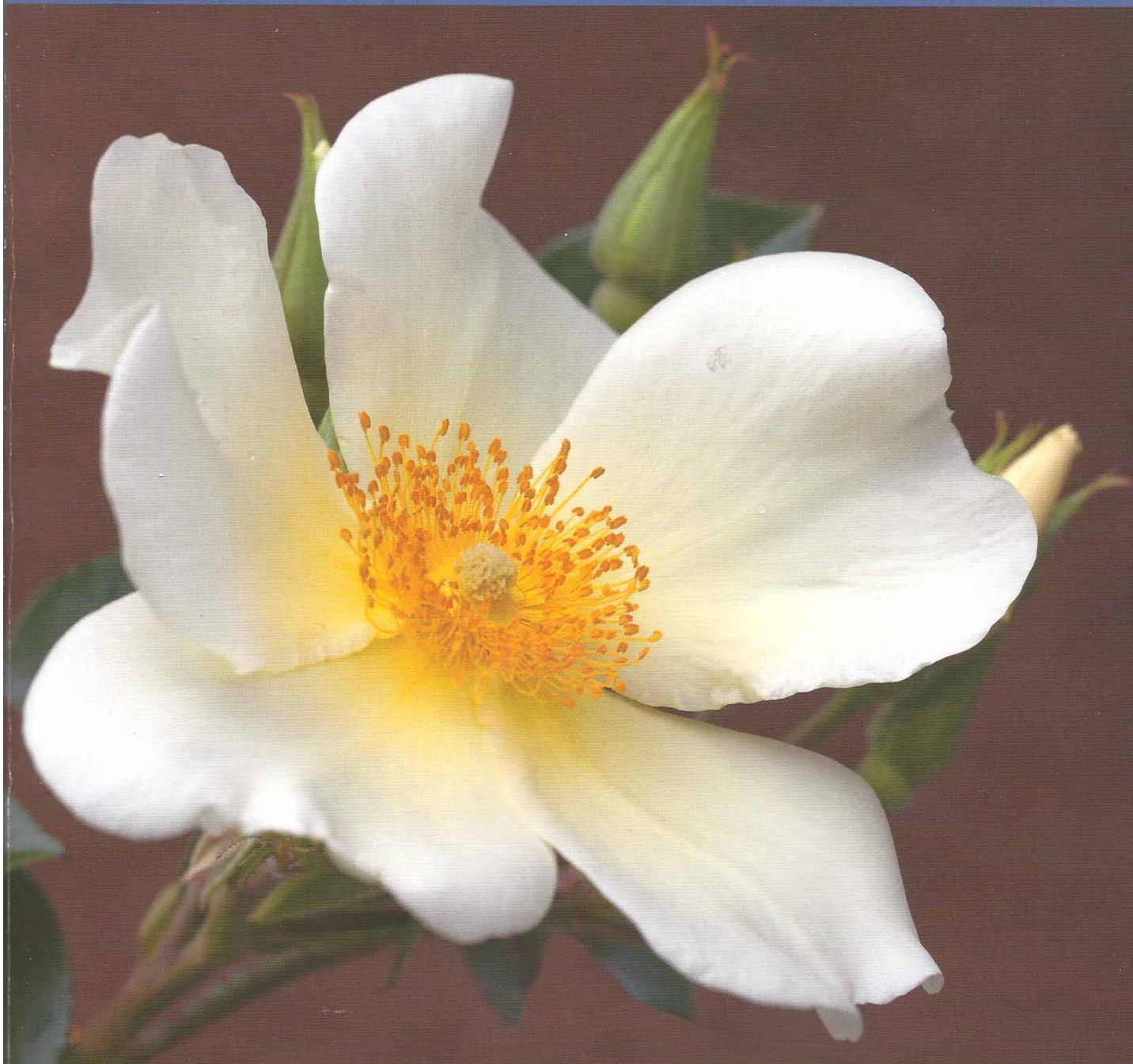


American Rose

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ROSES ACROSS THE USA

people, places, art and science

The International Rose Test Garden

Located in the west hills of Portland, OR, the International Rose Test Garden offers visitors the opportunity to stroll among thousands of beautiful blooms, while enjoying a splendid view of Mt. Hood to the east. Visitors from all over the world enjoy its lush 4.5 acres filled with more than 10,000 rosebushes of all kinds.

Oregon's rose history predates its inhabitants, as seen in fossils in Central Oregon. Thousands of hardy pioneers carried cuttings of roses along the Oregon Trail in the 1850s to the lush Willamette Valley. Today modern rose growers can witness ancient to modern varieties in the International Rose Test Garden.

Portland was dubbed the "City of Roses" around 1901 — likely by Frank Beech, a prominent citizen. For the 1905 Lewis and Clark Centennial Celebration, a lawyer named Frederick Holman suggested making the city more beautiful by having citizens plant roses. They complied in grand fashion, planting over 20 miles of roses,



Washington Park, Portland, OR

Washington Park, Portland, OR

by *Gretchen Humphrey*



photo courtesy Rich Baer

about 50,000 bushes, along the parade route with 'Madame Caroline Testout'.

Madame Caroline Testout was a French dressmaker who understood the value of marketing. While purchasing silks from Lyon, France — an important center for rose breeding at the time — she asked rose hybridizer Joseph Perner-Ducher to name a new rose for her. Its debut for the 1890 spring fashion show was celebrated, and 'Madame Caroline Testout's' popularity spread to America. In Portland, hundreds of 'Madame Caroline Testout' roses still bloom in the downtown Portland Park blocks every June.

The International Rose Test Garden has been a Portland landmark since 1917. Jesse Currey, a former Portland Rose Society President, chose the garden's site and began gaining support for creating a program for testing roses. Roses were shipped there for testing and safekeeping as a precaution against bombings during World War I. It is the oldest continuous-

ly running garden in the United States. The rose garden acreage used to be the Washington Park zoo. Hoofed animals resided on the south side of the garden, and elephants used to live just a quarter mile down the road from the main rose garden.

The International Rose Test Garden has several unique and beautiful areas. The Queen's Walk borders the east end. Here you can relive Portland's history. Queens of the Portland Rose Festival, a yearly celebration coordinated by the Rose Festival Foundation, have signed their names forever in brass plaques embedded in the brick paths. Thelma Hollingsworth was the first in 1914, and lovely Queen Emma Waibel is our 2014 Queen of Rosaria. Her plaque has a prominent place in a semicircle overlooking the city of Portland, flanked by the grandiflora 'Queen Elizabeth'. This year is the centennial anniversary for crowning the Queen of Rose Festival. Along the Queen's Walk wall, you'll see miniature roses, hybrid teas and stunning climbing roses.

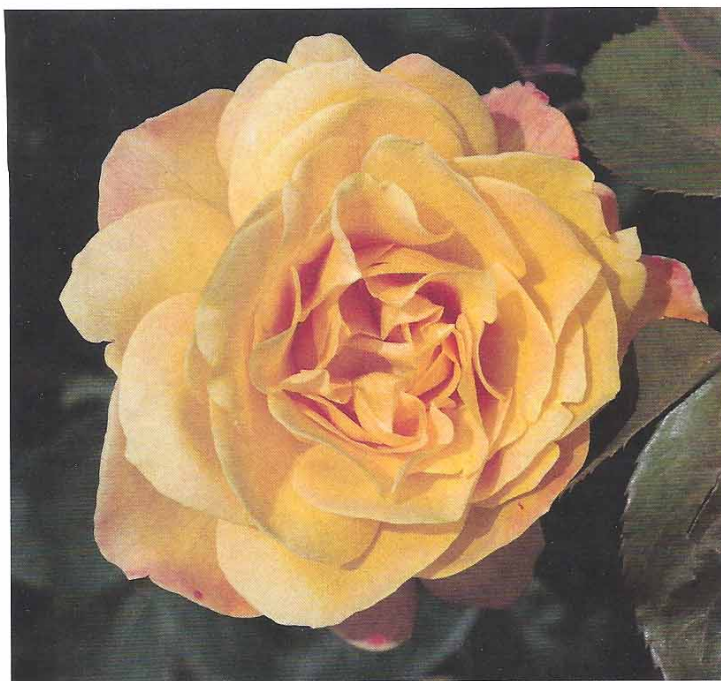
The Royal Rosarian Garden honors the respected civic organization of Portland. By Mayoral Declaration, Royal Rosarians are the "Official Greeters and Ambassadors of Goodwill for the City of Portland". In 2012, the life size Royal Rosarian statue was installed in the garden. It has become a must-have photo opportunity for visitors. Each Royal Rosarian is knighted under his/her specially chosen rose. In this garden, each Prime Minister's knighting rose is planted in honor of his or her service and dedication to the City of Portland. This year's Prime Minister Mark Smith chose the rose 'Quaker Star'. The Royal Rosarians strive to promote the "Rose as the Queen of Flowers and Portland as the Rose Capital of the World".

The first Gold Medal Award was given in 1919 for the best new rose variety. Half a century later in 1967, Rudolph Kalmbach, rose curator, wanted to establish a formal rose garden area. The Portland Rose Society offered support for this beautiful site and its large Pa-

vilion through years of fund raising efforts largely begun by members Dorothy Butler and Peggy Leonard. The coveted Portland's Gold Medal Award is recognized around the world as a standard of high quality roses. A committee of Portland Rose Society members evaluates several dozen roses for four years. Criteria include color, vigor, disease resistance, fragrance, form



'Madame Caroline Testout' and 'Grande Amore'



'Strike It Rich' and the Royal Rosarian

and any special quality that might make it a must-grow rose. A rose must earn over 80 points to continue year-to-year. The highest rated roses earn a coveted spot in the Gold Medal Award Garden. Portland Rose Society Presidents' plaques surround the brick wall around the Gold Medal Award Garden. Recent winners of the Gold Medal Award are 'Grande Amore', 'Over the

Moon', 'Dream Come True', 'Strike It Rich' and 'About Face'.

Just after the spring Portland Rose Society rose show and the Grand Floral Parade of the Rose Festival, we hold a special event called Portland's Best Rose in the Rose Garden. Since 1996, honored guests including the Rose Festival Court, VIPs and other invited rosarians gather in the Rose Garden to judge the best roses of the day. We don't have a judging school or other criteria — although PRS members might offer some advice on how one goes about judging a rose, if asked. The best hybrid tea, shrub, floribunda and grandiflora roses of that day are selected. The highest rated fragrant rose also gets an award. It's such a fun event because everyone, novice or seasoned rosarian, celebrates the beauty of the roses in the garden. Last June, Portland's Best Rose was 'Sparkle and Shine', a brilliant yellow floribunda. 'Pink Flamingo' won Best Grandiflora; 'Good as Gold' won People's Choice; 'Coral Cove' was the Best Shrub and 'White Licorice' was the Most Fragrant rose.

The Shakespeare Garden in the lower, shady section of the rose garden, is a popular site for weddings and strolling. This garden was dedicated in 1946 as a place "for the eye to rest" from all the color in the rose garden. Here you'll find a soothing mix of perennials, annuals, shrubs and trees bordered by clipped boxwood. Shakespeare's image appears in a plaque with the quote, "Of all Flowers, me thinks a Rose is best," spoken by the character Emilia in the play, "The Two Noble Kinsmen." Originally planted with plants mentioned in Shakespeare's plays, many thriving trees now provide too much

shade for those sun-loving plants.

Contrary to many visitors' predictions, not all roses in the garden are test roses. Those selected for testing are sent from several rose companies, as well as individual hybridizers who want their roses tested. Test roses are not sprayed with any pesticide, but are fertilized like the other roses. Although the AARS program was dis-

continued two years ago, the American Garden Rose Selection continues in its second year. Roses to be tested come from everywhere now, such as Kordes, David Austin and smaller companies. The garden curator and the IPM coordinator evaluate the test roses seven times each year. The garden also does independent testing for Weeks, Star Roses and Certified Roses. Our temperate climate is somewhat unique, and rose companies are eager to see how their roses do here. Four plants of each rose variety are evaluated for two years.

How does the garden work? Today, the absolute star of the garden would have to be its curator, Harry Landers. Harry came to work at the garden in 1990, as one of two horticulturists. No one visiting the International Rose Test Garden in Portland would believe that there is but one full time and two part time employees maintaining this incredible garden.

With the help of an army of volunteers including Master Gardeners, rose society members and hobbyists, Harry and his staff manage to keep the garden looking spectacular. Some local organizations regularly assist as well. Wells Fargo employees come annually and help with weeding for several hours. Seventy-plus members of an LDS church come to plant daffodils in the fall, as well as mulch and weed every May. The Rose Garden averages about 60 volunteers per month during the five blooming months, for deadheading alone. The Oregon State Beaver alumnae plant summer annuals and mulch the rosebeds. Even Community Service personnel take the opportunity to work in the garden in a program Harry piloted called Clean Slate. Here, a person can erase a bad deed by successfully completing several hours of work in the Rose Garden.

Working with new volunteers can be fun, yet challenging. Harry reports having had roses and sod planted upside down, and roses planted in the ground while still in their pots. He maintains his sense of humor, keeping instructions to new volunteers basic: "If it's not a rosebush with thorns, it's a weed and needs to come out." Once in a while a community service person will complain that it isn't like gardening on TV; "This is work!"

When rose canes are cut for deadheading, all refuse is collected for a mulch pile, which quickly becomes enormous. A tractor loads the canes into a grinder the



View of the International Rose Test Garden

size of a semi-trailer. This beast can chew materials up to 18-inches in diameter. Rose canes are ground up four to five times, and turned into fine garden mulch. In the garden, Harry doesn't have the time or space to compost, so the ground-up material is used as mulch.

How does Harry keep the roses beautiful? The soils are tested every two years, and then he'll make the decision whether or not to add lime to the soil, which tends to be acidic. The soil test company is also the fertilizer company, which supplies a slow release high nitrogen blend. This 29-5-10 fertilizer is applied every April, just once a year. The garden is fertilized with a hand-held spreader, spread as if "chicken feeding" around each bush. Harry uses about twenty 50



photo courtesy Rich Baer

pound bags of fertilizer to feed the entire garden.

The International Rose Test Garden uses the services of an Integrated Pest Management Coordinator, who oversees the need for fungicide spraying. He knows which roses might be the indicators for blackspot or powdery mildew, and keeps a close watch on those varieties. If spraying is needed in this public garden it must be done carefully on an early summer Monday, the day of lowest attendance. Harry ropes off each entrance and adds warning signs. The IPM coordinator mixes the spray in a 300 gallon truck and spraying begins about 4:30 a.m. Visitors must not enter until after all the rose leaves have dried, but usually may do so at about 8:30 a.m.

When Harry began working at the Rose Garden, there were only about 3200-3500 roses. Now they number more than 10,000. Harry has expanded the planting of roses to everywhere you look in the 4 plus acres of terraced beds. He's planted shrub and floribunda roses on banks, climbing roses around the tennis courts and recently added new plantings of English roses. The outskirts of the garden that were formerly lawn are now filled with beds of tall, healthy, robust blooming machines.

The challenges of maintaining more than 10 thousand rose plants are numerous. Harry's number one challenge is keeping the garden to a high standard of grooming with limited help and resources. The Rose Garden is usually weeded nine times per year. The use of a pre-emergent control isn't effective enough to make it worth the effort of application. Another big challenge is just keeping up with all the crews that work in the garden. One recent morning Harry coordinated Clean Slate workers, Community Service laborers and a crew digging trenches for irrigation repair.

Proper pruning provides perfect petals. In the spring, dozens of volunteers arrive at the garden to hand prune the roses to knee height. When fall comes around, the volunteer coordinator sends out a call for help. This year 41 hardy folks braved the cold, rainy November weather to hand cut all 10,000 roses to waist height in just 3-½ hours. The cut canes were hauled to the sidewalks, piled in windrows and the equipment crew came to pick everything up to be ground for mulch. By the end of the day, you'd never know that so many people had done so much work, except all the plants were much shorter. One year they tried using power hedge trimmers, but the canes fell into the plants and it was too tedious to remove them.

Choosing which varieties to plant is one of Harry's favorite duties. He contacts the rose companies and with their help decides which varieties should be planted in the garden. Not all roses remain in the garden forever, though. Each year, Harry takes the inventory list and the *Combined Rose List*, checking each variety one at a time. If the rose isn't available from three vendors in the U.S., Harry checks it off for removal. The roses he takes out are used for pruning clinics held by the Portland Rose Society and other local rose societies.

To prepare a brand new bed, Harry has the sod



View of the International Rose Test Garden

photo courtesy Rich Baer

removed, shovels in garden mulch, tills the soil, and plants the new varieties. Eight inches of ground-up leaves from the Parks Department are mixed into the whole bed. The International Rose Test Garden gets first priority use of these ground leaves, and then other local gardens may use them. The garden bed is leveled, staked and ready for planting. Grafted roses are planted with the bud union 1-inch below ground level. Although Portland's climate is mild compared with other regions in the country, we occasionally have spells of severe weather. The 422-foot elevation is just high enough in the West Hills to cause some plants to succumb during periods of prolonged low temperatures.

What is Harry's greatest reward? He'd quickly mention the tremendous volume of thank-you's he has received over the years from volunteers, visitors and even service workers. Harry has the uncommon gift of

making all these people feel important and welcome in the garden.

Harry Landers reports that his greatest accomplishment occurred in 2006, when Portland's International Rose Test Garden received The Garden of Excellence Award from the World Federation of Rose Societies. Only the most exceptional gardens receive this coveted award, just twenty gardens worldwide.

The next time you visit the City of Roses, Portland, OR, plan a visit to the International Rose Test Garden in Washington Park. Bring your camera, perhaps a picnic and prepare to be amazed at the spectacular garden and its incredible roses. Stroll at your leisure or join a group tour. You'll certainly be joined by happy people sniffing wondrous fragrances, with eyes popping at the incredible beauty of the rose.