Rosa glauca; Photo by Stephen Hoy

Singularly Beautiful Roses

A Publication Dedicated to Single, Nearly Single, and Semi-Double Flowered Roses
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Contents

The Red-Leafed Rose .............................................................................................................Page 2

Tom Mayhew - The Man, the Mini-Flora ........................................................................Page 8

From the Editor ....................................................................................................................Page 10

Sources & Contact Information .........................................................................................Page 11
The Alps mountain range is one of the most prominent geographic features of western Europe. The chain stretches roughly 750 miles (1200 km) across eight countries: Monaco, France, Switzerland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Germany, Austria, and Slovenia. The vast differences in location and elevation (to as much as 15,771 feet/4807 meters above sea level) give rise to extreme variations in climate. Among the contrasting climatic zones of the Alps it is estimated that there are over 13,000 plant species growing.

Alpine flora have been a subject of study for hundreds of years. One early work, written by physician, mathematician, and naturalist Johann Jakob Scheuchzer (1672-1733), was published in 1723. Entitled *Itinera per Helvetiae Alpinas Regiones Facta Annis 1702-1711*, it recounts his forays across Switzerland. The four-volume work contains a map of Switzerland, descriptions of physiological features, and various botanical observations. In it Scheuchzer references a species rose he discovered in 1709 growing in the vicinity of Grunewald, a village southeast of Bern, in the following terms, *Rosa foliis glaucis rubedine tinctiis flore rubro* (trans. “rose with gray-leaved foliage tinted red and red flowers”). He further notes that he had not encountered this intensely colored rose anywhere but near this village. This may be the first documented discovery of the rose now officially recognized as *Rosa rubrifolia* . . . or is it *Rosa glauca*?

The story of this species’ discovery and the various names assigned to it and a variety of similarly named roses is rather convoluted. In the U.S. its name is still recognized as *Rosa rubrifolia* Villars (1789). Dominique Villars (1745-1814), a French physician and botanist, was the first to assign the descriptor *rubrifolia* (red-leaved) to the species using the then relatively new Linnaean system of classification. It appears in the third volume of his work *Histoire des Plantes de Dauphine*, published in 1789, referencing floriculture found in Dauphin, an Alpine region in the southeast of France. He had previously labeled the rose *Rosa ferruginea* (rusty colored) in a work similarly titled ten years earlier. The 1789 amendment can be attributed to a variety of factors. His first work was written very early in his botanical career using a mixed-method classification system, with a use of Latin that frequently needed correction, and before having the benefit of familiarity with much in the way of comparative scholarly botanical data. His second work on the flora of Dauphin benefited greatly from a position secured at a university in Grenoble where the writing of other botanists, including Scheuchzer, informed his own knowledge.
During the ten-year interim between the two works written by Villars, French abbot and botanist Pierre André Pourret (1754-1818) had traveled from Narbonne, France to the Pyrenees mountain range along the border of France and Spain to discover and collect new plants. In 1783 he offered the collection and his documentation to the Academy of Sciences of Toulouse which published his findings in 1788. In his report he listed a rose found growing in the Pyrenees which he named *Rosa glauca*.

Interestingly, he prefaced his list of plants with a comment stating he avoided repeating plants already described by Villars in his 1779 work. Clearly, Pourret believed he had discovered a new species. Unfortunately, he was exiled to Spain by anti-Catholic French revolutionists in 1789 and his writing was largely unacknowledged for decades. However, in 1809 Paris based botanists Réne Desfontaines and Jaume Saint-Hillaire both published works that referenced the species as *Rosa glauca*/*Rosa glauque*. Each mention the Pyrenees as a place of discovery seeming to hint that they were familiar with Pourret’s writing.

As the 19th century unfolded and as *Rosa rubrifolia* began to appear in private herbariums and university botanical gardens throughout Europe, much was written about the species. Many botanical works quoted accessible sources and respected authors. Names given to what was assumed to be the same rose were included as synonyms. Perhaps the most confusing moment occurred when Villars used the name *Rosa glauca* to describe a potentially new species in 1809. It would take decades of debate and the inspection of collected specimens to bring clarity to the picture (see list of references at end of article). By mid-century most botanists accepted *R. rubrifolia* as the preferred name. In the 1870’s Belgian rose authority, François Crepin, appears to have had the keenest grasp of what was what. He postulated that Villars’ *R. ferruginea* was most likely a pink-flowered form of *R. canina*, that Pourret’s *R. glauca* was actually identical to Villars’ *R. rubrifolia*, and that Villars’ *R. glauca*, Reynier’s *R. multiflorum*, von Wulfen’s *R. glaucescens*, Desporte’s *R. vosagiaca* were all similar or identical pink-flowered, gray-leaved forms of *R. canina*. He conceded that although *R. glauca* should take precedence according to the rules of botanic reference, the name *R. rubrifolia* was so commonly in use that any change would be difficult to implement.
In North America *Rosa rubrifolia* was referenced in a book published in Philadelphia as early as 1806 by Irish-born horticulturist Bernard McMahon. Early mentions of the rose actually being grown in the western hemisphere include one indicating its having been planted in the Ottawa, Ontario Botanic Garden in 1895, and one in which *R. rubrifolia* appears on a list of plants featured in a large-scale landscape plan in northern New York in 1896. Andorra Nurseries in Philadelphia appears to be one of the earliest American nurseries to offer it, listing it in their catalog in 1901.

Graham Stuart Thomas has written, “There are very few shrubs of any kind with such distinctive garden value as this open-growing species . . .” Unusually, that unique feature is its foliage. The leaves of *R. rubrifolia*, comprised of five to seven leaflets, have variously been described as “blueish with shimmering overtones of burgundy and mauve,” “smoky violet green,” and “steely gray contrasted by beetroot red undersides.” Its glabrous (smooth) foliage is a distinguishing botanical characteristic that facilitated correct identification by early botanists. The smallish single-flowered blooms also have their own appeal, appearing in small clusters of rosy pink with a soft white center in late spring. On a mature specimen, the ruby red hips create a brilliant fall display and are useful for arrangements. The plant has an arching habit of growth, stems are reddish purple with scattered prickles.

**Update!** We American rose growers rely on *Modern Roses 12*, a 2007 publication of the American Rose Society, as our standard for rose names. The ARS approves rose names using the International Cultivar Registration Authority – Rosa, which in turn operates under the International Code of Nomenclature of Cultivated Plants. Up to the publication of *Modern Roses 12*, *R. rubrifolia* was the internationally recognized name of the species in question. The website helpmefind.com/robes/ still lists *R. rubrifolia* as the “correct” name. In 2016 a 9th edition of the ICNCP was approved and upon its publication *R. glauca* became the preferred name for the species. In references and photos, I’ve used the name the author/hybridizer used.
A few naturally occurring hybrids have occurred and some hybridization has been done with *R. glauca*. Canadian hybridizer Isabella Preston began to work with the species in the early 1920’s. ‘Carmenetta,’ a stout growing cross of *R. rubrifolia* with *R. rugosa*, has similarly colored, but larger flowers, and grayish foliage. Many of her other introductions have been lost to commerce, but one other that still lingers in botanic gardens is the very diminutive ‘Mohawk,’ an open pollinated seedling from the cross that produced ‘Carmenetta.’ [Author’s note; a great article written by Miss Preston appears in the 1940 *American Rose Annual.*] Other hybrids followed and are pictured with captions giving the cross when known and hybridizer/discoverer.
“Rubricana”  
*R. rubrifolia* x *R. nutkana*  
Bred by Rolf Sievers  
Photo by Rolf Sievers

“Rubrigosa”  
*R. rubrifolia* x *R. rugosa alba*  
Bred by Rolf Sievers  
Photo by Rolf Sievers

Below:  
*R. rubrifolia* x *R. pendulina*  
Bred by Joan Monteith  
Photo by Robert Rippetoe

Below  
(R. *rugosa* *3* x *R. rubrifolia*) x self  
Bred by Robert Byrnes  
Photo by Robert Byrnes

Above:  
‘Louis Riel’  
*R. rubrifolia* x ‘Altaica’  
Bred by Stanley Zubrowski  
Photo by Leonard Heller
Although most of us primarily grow roses for their flowers, adding *Rosa rubrifolia* to the garden might transform us into . . . horticulturists! It enhances foliage consciousness and suggests that there are additional gardening elements in which to take delight. We may become inspired to take a more “painterly approach” to our overall palette of plants, remembering the words of Gertrude Jekyll, “Beds we have had, and arches and bowers, but very little as yet in the whole range of possible Rose garden beauty.”

*R. glauca x R. pendulina*
Bred by Becky Weeks
Photo by Becky Weeks

*R. glauca x 'Fru Dagmar Hastrup'*
Bred by Becky Weeks
Photo by Becky Weeks

*R. glauca x 'Heavenly Rosalind'*
Bred by Becky Weeks
Photo by Becky Weeks

[ R. glauca x Dbl. White Spin] x 'Citrus Splash' – Bred by Becky Weeks
Photo by Becky Weeks (stigmas removed!)
Author’s Note: More than fifty botanical sources are presented in chronological order at the end of this newsletter along with end notes. Comments are included to distinguish between references to *Rosa rubrifolia* and *Rosa glauca* when they are synonyms and when they refer to different species. Some additional names are included that occasionally appear in botanical references.

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Tom Mayhew - the Man, the Mini-Flora

Fragrant. The number one rated exhibition Mini/Mini-Flora variety and number three rated garden Mini/Mini-Flora variety in the 2019 Roses In Review report. Vigorous. Single-flowered! In the words of song-writing team George and Ira Gershwin, “Who could ask for anything more?”

In 2015, rose grower Tom Mayhew received a surprise letter from rose exhibitor, hybridizer, and owner of For Love of Roses, Richard Anthony. In celebration of his 80th birthday, Richard asked for permission to name a rose for the Pennsylvania rose grower. He knew Tom as a prominent member of the Penn-Jersey District of the American Rose Society (ARS), an exhibitor, a Consulting Rosarian, a Horticultural Judge, author of a variety of articles on roses and rose culture, and awardee of Penn-Jersey’s 2008 ARS Silver Honor Medal.

As a retired electrical engineer some of Tom’s meticulous attention to detail can also be found in a related hobby – photography. His outstanding rose photos have won awards in local and national ARS photo contests and have been featured inside and on the cover of the ARS magazine and in ARS calendars. He was also one of the writers of the *ARS Guidelines and Rules for Judging Rose Photography*. In addition to roses, Tom photographs birds and wildlife in and around his Pennsylvania yard.

Among the 700 or so roses of all kinds that Tom grows, Richard knew Tom was a big fan of single-flowered roses, including a rising star in the world of Mini-Floras, the very fragrant, yellow-flowered ‘Sunglow.’ The new seedling Richard offered to name for Tom was raised by putting a mix of pollen on ‘Sunglow.’ It is a blend of mauve shades on the edges of its five to seven petals with a white center offset by lemon yellow anthers sitting atop white filaments. The 3” blooms are noticeably fragrant and arrive one-per-stem and in small sprays. The bush is vigorous and upright growing and can

‘Tom Mayhew’

Photo by Stephen Hoy
easily be grown as an own-root plant. So far it has done well without fungicidal intervention in my Georgia garden. And as one might expect of a rose named for Tom, ‘Tom Mayhew’ photographs well!

‘Tom Mayhew’ Rose & Bird photos by Tom

Rose-Breasted Grosbeak          Goldfinch
Peacock                               Cardinal
From the Editor

When I began the research on *Rosa rubrifolia/glauca* I dashed off several emails to inquire which was the “correct” name. I received conflicting replies. Thanks to Charles Quest Ritson and Crenagh Elliott for enlightening me re: the update on *R. glauca*. The research took me deep into multiple languages – Latin, French, and German - internet translation resources are amazing. Over fifty original sources (thanks to digitally reproduced books) were consulted spanning more than 200 years of botanical research. One uncited article provided unique insight into the 1779 work of Dominique Villars. Entitled, “Dr. Villars and his botanical disciples,” it appears in *Huntia, A Journal of Botanical History*, Vol. 15, No. 1, 2014, published by the Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburg, PA. Author Roger L. Williams documents how Villars’ botanical knowledge evolved and how the French Revolution drastically changed the academic environment and diminished the important horticultural role performed by Roman Catholic abbots, many of whom were involved in collecting and growing plants still thought to play a medicinal role in daily life. I believe the article on the species may be the most updated and thoroughly researched available. However, my conclusions have not been peer-reviewed.

A brief comment on my frustration with software companies. A perfectly functional laptop/desktop becomes obsolete because it will not adapt to updated versions of software. New software is written to make previously purchased software incompatible. Two of the fonts I have used since 2010 recently disappeared into the wild blue yonder. I was able to recover one under a different name, but not the other. All saved SBR newsletters with those fonts and saved as Word documents lost their formatting, having been updated with something deigned to be a new default. Arghh! Fortunately, all were saved as PDF’s, so I can refer to those when I have time to update.

The rose season here in central Georgia has been fantastic. Having learned a lesson years ago, I pruned a little later than usual and fortunately suffered no late frost damage. As of this moment my garden’s first cycle of bloom is almost over. Facebook informs me that some in the northern United States are still under snow and my Australian and New Zealand friends are just encountering the onset of winter.

Which prompts me to highlight some rose-related Facebook pages I am enjoying. “Paul Zimmerman Roses Gardening” is a public group for experts and novices; advice is often solicited. It is also a great forum for your photos. “Old and David Austin Roses” is a private group that just requires a request to join and features outstanding photos from around the world. “The Magnificent Rose” is a public group and again features great rose photos from around the world. “Roses N Roses” is a public group and features all kinds of roses and rose photos from many countries other than the U.S. I’ve connected there with rose enthusiasts from all over the world. One common request – please identify the rose in your picture if known. If id help is needed more than a photo is necessary.

“Botany is the art of dessicating plants between two sheets of blotting paper and then of abusing them in Greek and Latin.”

- Alphonse Karr
Sources and Contact Information

*Rosa glauca/rubrifolia* – available from numerous nurseries in the U.S., Canada, and Europe. Sold as either/or.

‘Carmenetta’ – available in Canada and Europe.

‘Tom Mayhew’ – For Love of Roses; forloveofroses.com

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List of Botanical Sources Consulted Through 1910

* indicates source not available digitally


1779 - Dominique Villars names a rose *R. ferruginea* in *Prospectus de l'Histoire des Plantes de Dauphiné*, 1779, p. 46. Villars quotes Manetti in his 1779 work re: *Rosa ferruginea*. (Crepin suggests that this rose may be *R. hibernica* or *R. canina* in *Annuaire du Conservatoire & du Jardin Botaniques de Genève*, 1897, p. 35.)


1788 – Louis Reynier refers to a rose as *Rosa multiflore* (from Switzerland) in *Mémoires pour server a l'Histoire Physique et Naturelle de la Suisse*, Vol. I, Lausanne & Paris, 1788, p. 222. **NOT** to be confused with *R. multiflora* from Japan & China. Questionable association with *R. rubrifolia*, may be a form of *R. canina* according to later sources, i.e. Keller.

1793 – Ludovico Bellardi refers to a *R. rubrifolia* in *Memoires de l’Academie Royale des Sciences Années 1790-91*, Turin, 1793, p. 229. He references *R. rubrifolia* (Villars-1789). Mentions he keeps a specimen he found in the Savoie (Sabaudiae in Latin) Alps in France. [Note; many sources confusingly refer to a Bellardi reference to *R. glandulosa* which was subsequently classed as *R. dumalis*. Bellardi’s description of *R. rubrifolia* matches Villars’].


1802 – Johan Rudolf Suter refers to it as *R. canina* in *Flora Helvetica: exhibens plantas Helvetiae indigenus Hallerianas*, Vol. I, Zurich, 1802, p. 302. He quotes Scheuchzer also and notes that it “only has the appearance of *R. canina*.”

*1802 – Jean-Christien Stolz refers to a rose previously named *Rosa balloniana* (by Hermann) in *Flore des Plantes qui Croissent dans les Départemens du Hauts Bas-Rhin par la Ci- Devant Alsace*, Strasbourg, 802, p. 38. I was unable to find a reference in works by Hermann, but the name *R. balloniana* comes up multiple times in botanical references as a synonym for *R. rubrifolia*. See Mutel-1834 and Kirschleger-1836.*


1805 – Lorenz Chrysanth von Vest refers to it as *R. rubrifolia* in *Manuale Botanicum inserviens excursionibus botanicus, sistens Stirpes totius Germaniae phaenogamas*, Klagenfurt, 1805, p. 787.


1809 – René Desfontaines refers to it as *Rosa glauca/rubrifolia* in *Histoire des Arbres Arbrisseaux*, Vol. II, Paris, p. 165. He was clearly familiar with Pourret’s writing as he references the Pyrenees as a place of
discovery, but other authors link it to *R. glauca* (Villars-1809).


1817 – Claude Antoine Thory (Redoute) refers to it as *R. rubrifolia* (“Rosier à feuilles Rougeâtres” in French) in *Les Roses*, Vol. I, 1817, p. 31


*1821* – Jacquin fils refers to it as *Rosa gutensteinensis* in *Hortus Botanicus Universitatis Vindobonensis*, 1821, p. 3. Numerous sources state it is the same as *R. rubrifolia* in his father’s work *Fragmenta Botanica* (Jacquin-1809).


1831 – Nikolaus Thomas Host refers to it as *Rosa livida* in *Flora Austriaca*, Vol. II, Vienna, 1831, p. 25. He also references Jacquin’s *R. rubrifolia* and Jacquin fils *Rosa gutensteinensis*.


1836 - Frédérick Kirschleger refers to it as *R. rubrifolia* in *Prodrome de la Flore d’Alsace*, Strasbourg, 1836, p.
32. He also classes Desvaux’s’ *R. glauca/glaucescens* (1809) as a form of *R. canina* with *glaucorubentibus* (gray, red-tinted) foliage. Also gives *R. balloniana* as a synonym. See Stolz-1802 and Mutel-1834.


1843 – Dominique Alexandre Godron refers to it as *R. rubrifolia* in *Flore de Lorraine (Meurthe, Moselle, Meuse, Vosges)*, Nancy, 1843, p. 219.

1846 – Wilhem Daniel Joseph Koch refers to it as *R. rubrifolia* in *Synopsis de Deutschen und Schweizer Flora*, Leipzig, 1846, p. 265. Also references Host, Jacquin, and Jacquin fils.


1875 – Charles Grenier refers to it as *R. rubrifolia* in *Flore de la chaine jurassique*, p. 61, 63. He gives credit to Pourret and offers insight into why *R. glauca* should be recognized as the correct name.


1876 – Dominique Alexandre Godron argues that *R. glauca* (Villars-1809) was discovered by a Dr. Mouget in “Note sur le *Rosa glauca* de Villars,” *Bulletin de la Société Royale Botanique de Belgique*, Vol. XV, Brussels, 1876, p. 485-491. Provides numerous sources. Disputes that it is a distinct species.

1877 – Eduard August von Regel refers to it as *R. rubrifolia* in *Tentamen Rosarum Monographiae*, St. Petersburg, 1877, p. 75.


1897 – François Crepin summarizes the various names in *Annuaire du Conservatoire & du Jardin Botaniques de Genève*, Geneva, 1897, p. 21-22, 35, 46-47, 56-57. Gives credit to Scheuchzer as the first to describe it.

1897 – François Crepin offers additional clarification re: the validity of the name *R. rubrifolia* in *Priorité des Noms Spécifiques au Point de Vue du Genre Rosa*, Genève, 1897, p. 159-160.


1910 – Ellen Willmott refers to it as *R. rubrifolia* in *The Genus Rosa*, London, Pt. XXI, 1912, p. 399-400. It offers a good summary of references and mentions its intro to UK in 19th century.

**End Notes for “The Red-Leafed Rose”**
