





*Anne Belovich
on the*

Barbier Ramblers

Today, in the November chill, I walked through one of our pergolas where the Barbier Ramblers displayed their summer glory. As I progressed from one end to the other, I reached up with my needle-nosed garden pruners and lopped off all the slender, dangling canes that were attempting to rob passersby of their hair and outer garments. They were so thin that they severed readily and were easily kicked aside, a wise move since I had failed to bring gloves to protect my hands from their vicious hooked prickles. The roses in this pergola show many such characteristics typical of the Wichurana Ramblers, since most of Barbier's Ramblers were bred from that class.

Rosa wichurana is a scrambling, white-flowered wild rose from along the coastline of eastern Asia. The species includes several closely related varieties, including one sometimes given separate species status as *R. luciae*. A German government lawyer named Max Ernst Wichura first collected *R. wichurana* in Japan in 1859 and brought it back for display in the Berlin Botanic Garden. The present spelling properly carries his name and agrees with the Latin rules of nomenclature, unlike



the former spelling, “wichuriana.”

Although *R. wichurana* was first introduced in Europe, it was not used for breeding until the American, Jackson Dawson, of the Arnold Arboretum acquired it in 1891. Only after it was passed on to some other American breeders did it return to Europe in the hands of René Barbier to be used for rose hybridizing, first in France, and then in Germany and England.

Some of the most beautiful of all Wichurana Ramblers can be found among



the roses planted on our pergola. They include 18 of the roses of that group, plus two from other groups, that were created by René Barbier in Orleans, France between 1900 and 1930. The earliest ones were produced by crossing *R. wichurana* with Teas, Chinas, Noisettes, and Polyanthas. Later, Barbier used Hybrid Teas.

The decorative features such as double, larger flowers in a wide range of colors come from the non-Wichurana parents, but typical Wichurana patterns are also pervasive. The leaves are shiny, smooth, flat, disease-resistant, and ovate or almost round. The prickles are usually not numerous, but they catch like fish hooks and those on the underside of the leaf's midrib are sharp as needles. There is a tendency to bloom late and also to produce a few flowers late in the season. Typically, the growth is so flexible that the canes will fall over and slither along the ground unless they are supported. I have found some that have traveled through our roughly mown lawn at least 10 feet from the parent plant, entirely hidden by the grass until the tip pops up a bit to seek the light. This malleability is an endearing feature for gardeners with arbors and pergolas.

The Wichurana Ramblers are very vigorous. Many, like ALBÉRIC BARBIER (1900), ALBERTINE (1921), and FRANÇOIS FOUCARD (1900), will grow to at least 16 feet, and ALEXANDRE GIRAULT (1909) grows to roughly 33 feet on the great trellis at Roseraie de l'Häy-les-Roses near Paris. In harsh climates, most of the Barbier Ramblers are not considered winter-proof, although they do bloom best after a bit of winter chill. The species parent is tolerant of a fairly cold temperature. The lack of hardiness in the hybrids is the



PAGE 28: Le Poilu. Photo by Étienne Bouret.

PAGE 29: Edmond Proust. Photo by Anne Belovich.

LEFT TOP AND ABOVE: Albéric Barbier plate; François Guillot. Photos by Étienne Bouret.

LEFT BOTTOM: Albertine and other Barbiers. Photo by Anne Belovich.





result of Barbier's extensive use of yellow and copper-toned Teas and Tea/Noisettes in the quest for a superior yellow rose that energized rose breeders at that time. This practice produced only cream or a soft yellow color that faded quickly, but it serendipitously resulted in earlier blooming and larger flowers.

Toward the end of his career, Barbier made some Wichurana crosses with Pernetianas (Hybrid Tea types with *R. foetida* ancestry), successfully producing three roses with intense modern colors: JACOTTE (1920, deep-toned copper/orange), PRIMÈVERE (1929, clear yellow with little fading), and COUPE D'OR (1930, deep yellow with lighter outer petals). The Pernetianas also brought greater hardiness to the Wichurana Ramblers.

Not all of the Barbier Ramblers bear larger flowers. Those bred from Polyanthas like CASIMIR MOUILLÉ and PAUL PLOTON are small-flowered, as is FERDINAND ROUSSEL, a descendant of HIAWATHA. Perhaps FRANCIS should be included here as well, although we are not certain if the rose identified as FRANCIS today is the same as that described by Barbier in 1907 or the one offered for sale by Fauque et Fils in 1909. In most current literature, Fauque is given credit for the rose now offered for sale, but according to Brent Dickerson (1999) in the *Old Rose Adventurer*,

ABOVE LEFT: Jacotte. BELOW LEFT: Paul Dauvesse. ABOVE: Elisa Robichon. Photos by Anne Belovich.



Barbier pergola in 1976. Photo by Anne Belovich.

the FRANCIS that we know matches Barbier's description. There is no description available from Fauque. FRANCIS resembles its parent TURNER'S CRIMSON RAMBLER closely but has single flowers.

At one time, the larger flower pattern of the majority of Barbier's roses was attributed to the use of *R. luciae* in Barbier's work rather than *R. wichurana*, but these two varieties are too close to each other morphologically to make a significant difference, even if true.

Barbier did some work with species other than *R. wichurana*. For AUGUSTE ROUSSEL, a vigorous, semi-double pink rambler with slightly wavy petals and a great circle of golden stamens, he used *R. macrophylla* and a Tea. PAUL DAUVESSE, the last rose he bred (1933), was a soft yellow *R. multiflora* hybrid. WICHMOSS is a climbing moss bred from *R. wichurana* and SALET. There were also a number of non-climbing varieties, especially Polyanthas. At present I grow a total of twenty-one Barbier Ramblers with great hopes of acquiring several more in the next few years. I don't know if it is an obsession or a love affair, or both.



ANNE BELOVICH and her husband Max live in Washington State in a home they built themselves in a woodland clearing where she grows more than 900 roses, mostly Climbers and Ramblers. Biologist, teacher, scuba diver, and photographer, she recently traveled to Italy, Germany, and France in search of old roses. Anne is currently working on a book on Ramblers.