





the Joys and Rewards *of* Importing Roses

Anne Belovich

“Joys and rewards! Are you losing your wits in your old age? What about the long delays at the inspection station with the roses finally arriving dead? Or the roses being confiscated by a compulsive official over missing paperwork or an imagined pathology? Are you forgetting about the two years quarantine, and then the annoyance of discovering that you have been sent some wrong varieties? And the expenses of shipping and officialdom added to all of that?” Yes, I’ll readily admit to having gone through many frustrations associated with importing roses, but at the same time I would have missed some important experiences in my life if I had not persevered. Of course, in the beginning I didn’t know this. I was simply driven by a blind passion for roses.

I began importing roses in 2001 when I had used up most of the domestic sources for the varieties of roses I wanted, mainly climbers. Some friends advised me on getting an import permit and setting up a quarantine site in my yard. The quarantine site was easy. I just used my fenced vegetable garden equipped with a small greenhouse and an outdoor water hydrant. I no longer had time for vegetables, or much of any-

LEFT: ‘Madeleine Seltzer’ ABOVE LEFT: ‘Elisa Robichon’ (photos by Étienne Bouret)
ABOVE RIGHT: ‘Buttermere’ (photo by Anne Belovich)



ABOVE: 'Auguste Roussel'

LEFT: Anne with 'Dawson' (photos by Anne Belovich)

thing else, once I got addicted to roses. The site was readily approved by the gracious and helpful state plant inspector. But the permit took four months to arrive, a warning about future pitfalls.

I found several helpful but cautionary articles about importing roses in *American Rose Rambler*, a newsletter edited by Peter Schneider. They reinforced my concerns

considerably, but after several days of mulling over the pros and cons of the venture, I decided that the rewards were well worth the risks.

I would go ahead with importing, but I made some bargains with myself about how to deal with likely problems. I would stoically accept the costs, including any losses of plants after they were shipped. And I consoled myself with the thought that according to the laws of probability I would win a certain percentage of the time. If wrongly labeled roses were sent, I would plan to e-mail back a photo of the correct rose and ask for a replacement. Many foreign rose growers will not export their products to the United States because our regulations make it too difficult or unprofitable. I decided to make every attempt not to add to the problems of those willing few for

fear that they might discontinue the service. If I had any concern about the exporter losing money on my order, perhaps from having to drive a long way to the inspection, from accepting my credit card for payment, or from doing custom budding, I would send extra money voluntarily. If plants were condemned and destroyed at the inspection station, or if they died on the way, I would allow myself an hour or so of bitter weeping and hand wringing, but I would still pay the exporter. I also vowed to do my best to follow the rules and regulations of the state and the feds, even though there was occasionally more than a bit of larceny in my heart. This was all about building relationships, something that proved to be far more important than the money for a lost shipment of roses. And finally, no matter what went wrong, I vowed I would not give up until I achieved my goals.

Some of my fears materialized but my plans worked quite well and many of my hopes were rewarded. I have lost two shipments of plants, one for a supposed fungus infection and one for a phytosanitary certificate problem. I have had to endure the occasional disappointment of wrong roses. But I have developed some wonderful friendships with people in Europe who have helped me, with people to whom I have given plants, and even with the state plant inspector who has kindly been more of a teacher than an official in correcting my mistakes.

My imports have been mainly from the Loubert's Nursery in France and Martin Weingart's nursery in Germany, but I have also had good service from the André Eve and Kordes nurseries. Eléanore Cruz doesn't export because of her remote location, but she once graciously agreed to send roses to the Loubert nursery so they could forward them to me. They have all been friendly, quick to answer my queries, patient with my mistakes, and tolerant of my letters, which are written in a strange brand of French or German constructed partly from translation software, partly from foreign language dictionaries, and some from a much faded memory of language classes taken more than half a century ago. Shipments of wonderful climbing roses have arrived each year to adorn my fences, arbors, and pergolas.

Long ago we built a fence around our entire 5 acres to keep our Alaskan Malamute sled dog team from raiding the neighbor's chicken coups. It also served as home for my first climbers. A number of large trees became decorated with huge invaders like 'Kiftgate'. I was inspired by the beauty of my new treasures to seek further, and in 2003 I developed an exciting plan to drive through Europe with a friend so we could get a firsthand picture of what varieties of climbing roses still existed there and might be available. We were sure that many not offered anywhere commercially would be revealed in public and private gardens. Starting with the ultimate romantic garden of Ninfa in Italy and ending up at the magnificent Europa Rosarium at Sangerhausen, Germany, we carefully picked our way through 23 rose gardens and nurseries.

What I saw of the European garden style took me back to memories from my Depression-era childhood in the 1930s, a time when elaborate gardens from the earlier, more prosperous economy still graced the older houses. As we traveled, we observed intricate trellising of every kind, planted with dozens of gorgeous roses, many that I had never heard of before. Some like 'Dawson', 'Philadelphia Rambler', and 'William C.



ABOVE: 'Mrs. F. F. Prentiss' RIGHT: 'Pink Roamer' BELOW RIGHT: Anne's quarantine area
(photos by Anne Belovich)

Egan' were American-bred roses that had been long lost to commerce in this country. I would soon be able to reintroduce them. Others of special interest were the beautiful Barbier Ramblers, created around the turn of the twentieth century by the French nursery Barbier et Cie. I loved 'Albertine', 'Paul Transon', and a few others already adorning my fence, and now I wanted to grow all of them. These roses are all Ramblers, superbly suited for growing on arbors and pergolas. I decided to specialize in this group.

When I got home, I had two jobs to do: start designing my Depression-era garden structures and collect Ramblers to cover them. 'Alexandre Tremouillet', I learned, was available from the André Eve Nursery and 'Paul Dauvesse', 'August Roussel', and 'Casimir Moullé' could be bought from the Loubert Nursery, both in France. They were ordered immediately and arrived in the fall. I planned to keep my designs fairly rustic so we would not have to fuss with finishing and maintenance. That settled, there was still the most important task, the actual building of all the arbors, pergolas, and lattices that I wanted. I discussed the project with my husband, and with unexpected enthusiasm, he ordered lumber and started construction on the pavilion at the north end of our formal garden. Slowed at times by bad weather, ill health, or my addition of new plans, there are a few projects still in the drawing stage, but in addition to the pavilion and its associated fences, we have two pergolas, six arbors, and numerous lattices and pillars proudly holding up the roses.

Learning to import roses opened up a whole new field of possibilities over what was available from domestic sources. I was able to acquire many rare beauties to en-

hance the new architecture. Some of my favorites are ‘La Fraîcheur’, a Rambler first seen in Odile Masquelier’s garden; ‘Mosel’, a lovely addition to my group of blue Ramblers; ‘Regierungsrat Rottenberger’, the beautiful rose with a name that doesn’t match; and the fragrant, floriferous ‘Madeleine Selzer’. I have strayed from my Rambler commitment occasionally to acquire some unusual Gallicas—‘Belle Hélène’, ‘Gros Provins Panachée’, and ‘Pourpre Charment’, and have been tempted by the Hybrid Perpetuals ‘Margaret Haywood’, ‘Mlle. Renée Denis’, and ‘Le Havre’.



More roses still beckon from my visit to European gardens. With the help of my German friend, Harald Enders, and the willingness of the nurseryman Martin Weingart, I hope to receive the Sangerhausen roses ‘Buttermere’, ‘Mrs. F. F. Prentiss’, and ‘Ruby Queen’ in the fall. The Loubert’s nursery will also be sending ‘Elisa Robichon’ (a rare Barbier hybrid), ‘Pink Roamer’, and ‘South Orange Perfection’ (both by Horvath), ‘Troubadour’ (Walsh), and others, all generously collected for me from Roseraie de la Haÿ by Étienne Bouret. Fabien Ducher has kindly offered to send ‘Duc de Constantine’, ‘Source d’Or’, and perhaps ‘Superba’ (Feast). Maybe Max will build another pergola.

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. Anne, who currently serves on the board of the HRF, holds a master’s degree in botany from UCLA.

