



'Take Five' - Miniflora
Photo by Stephen Hoy

Singularly Beautiful Roses

*A Publication Dedicated to Single,
Nearly Single, and Semi-Double Flowered Roses*
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The “Nondescript” - aka - “Cherokee Rose.”

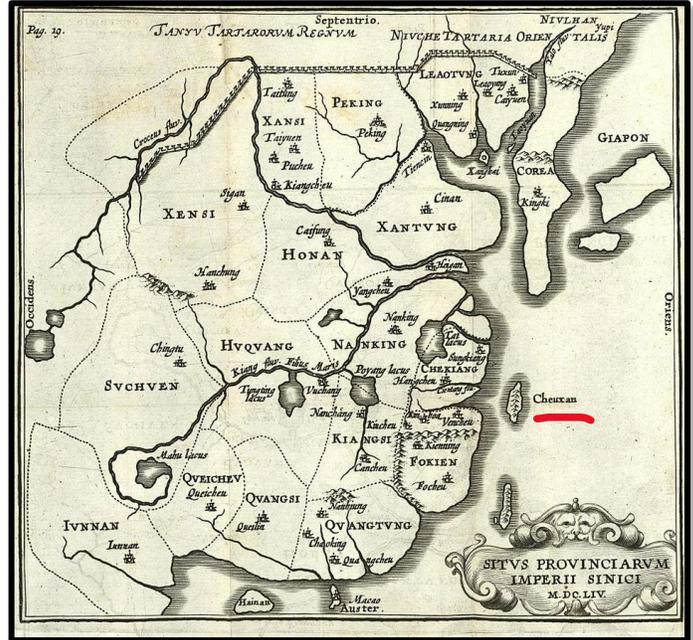
As a forty-year resident of Georgia it feels almost compulsory to write an article about our state flower – *Rosa laevigata*. My introduction to the species occurred during the years I worked for my in-laws in the nursery and greenhouse business. Both my father and mother-in-law were born and raised in the southwestern corner of Georgia, near the Kolomoki Indian Mounds. Having eight raised-earth mounds, including a temple mound, burial and ceremonial mounds, it is the oldest and largest Woodland Indian site in the southeastern United States. Like generations before them my in-laws knew the rose as the “Cherokee Rose.” How did it come to be known by that misleading name? Keep reading!

Despite the fact that French botanist André Michaux believed he had discovered a new species of rose in the vicinity of Savannah, Georgia in the late 1790’s, one European botanist had already accurately documented that it was native to China. That reference appears in a botanical work published in 1705 by English botanist and physician Leonard Plukenet, entitled *Almagestum Botanicum*.

A fellow plant enthusiast and friend, James Cunninghame, had traveled to China in 1698 and returned with an extensive collection of plant species, seeds, and watercolors painted by local artists. Although Cunninghame traveled back to China in 1700, he faced numerous political, physical, and cultural difficulties and died before returning to England. Despite his death, a second set of collected horticultural specimens and materials was safely sent to England. From the shared treasure chest of exotic plants and descriptions provided by Cunninghame, Plukenet described it as following, *Rosa alba Cheusanensis, foliorum marginibus, & rachi medio spinosis*.¹ A rough translation is – “white flowered rose from Cheusan (modern day Taiwan– previously known as Formosa) with serrated leaf margins and spiny leaf axes.” A dried specimen preserved in the British Museum was later confirmed to be identical to *Rosa laevigata*.

The once-blooming species has 3-4” white five petaled flowers that are sweetly fragrant, offset by bright yellow stamens. The blooms, one-per-stem but appearing at every leaf node near the tip of the stem, appear in early spring – mid-March in Georgia this year. Long 20-30’ stems armed with hooked prickles are clad with trifoliate dark green shiny leaves with serrated leaflets. The smooth foliage, the basis for the Latin name, is resistant to black spot in my climate and is reported to be powdery mildew resistant in other areas. Flowers are followed by bristly, orange-red hips.

Rosa laevigata
Photo by Robert Rippetoe



Map of China, Japan, & Korea ca. 1654.
Island of Cheuxuan/Cheusan underlined in red.



Summary of Synonymy

R. alba ches. . . ., Plukenet, 1705
R. laevigata, Michaux, 1803
R. ternata, Poiret, 1804
R. sinica, Aiton, 1811
R. cherokeensis, Donn, 1811
R. nivea, De Candolle, 1813
R. trifoliata, Bosc, unk
R. hystrix, Lindley, 1820
R. cucumeria, Trattinck, 1823
R. amygdalifolia, Seringe, 1825
R. tryphylla, Roxburgh, 1832
R. camellia, Sieb., unk
R. camelliaeflora, Hort., unk



Numerous synonyms appeared in the work of European botanists in the early decades of the 19th century, all stating that the rose was native to the Far East. It was reported to have been in cultivation in England as early as 1759 by William Aiton in his 1789 work *Hortus Kewensis*.² Most scholars agree that the rose he named *Rosa sinica*, although originally thought to be synonymous with *R. laevigata*, was instead, a form of early Tea or China. One exception was the name given to the species in 1809 by Englishman James Donn, botanist and curator of the Cambridge University Botanic Garden. The specimen in the garden had likely been imported from America via Scottish plant collector John Lyon. Donn's name for the rose was *Rosa cherokeensis*.³

Returning to the question at hand, the use of the common name “Cherokee Rose” in America can be traced back to events occurring during the latter half of the 18th century through the 19th. A loosely connected link between Charleston, SC, Savannah, GA, and Philadelphia, PA sheds light on the rose's American heritage, but only up to a point. Several key names include botanist/plant collectors William and John Bartram, André Michaux, Stephen Elliott, the Rev. Henry Muhlenberg, Dr. Benjamin Smith Barton, John Lyon, Frederick Pursch, and Matthias Kinn. André Michaux was trained from a young age in the field of botany, studying both in Versailles and Paris. His first botanical collecting trip took him through modern day Iraq and Iran. After his return Michaux was sent to America in 1785 to discover new species of trees to improve the agriculture and forestry of his home country. Upon his arrival in New York, he established a collecting garden near modern-day Hackensack, NJ. Shortly thereafter, he visited Philadelphia to meet both Benjamin Franklin and William Bartram. Inspired by Bartram's exploration of America's southern states, Michaux resolved to travel southward. In 1786 he sailed for Charleston, SC and while there created a second holding garden to be filled with local plants as well as plants imported from France. His first southern collecting exploration commenced in late April of 1787 at the mouth of the Savannah River on the Georgia coastline. It would continue up the river into Augusta, GA/SC, continue into Cherokee Territory in northeastern Georgia, cross into North Carolina and Tennessee, and end on June 19th near Seneca, SC. During the trip he observed and collected numerous indigenous plants.

On or around the 28th of April, at the very onset of his journey, he crossed land that was part of Morton Hall, a plantation formerly in the possession of Nathaniel Hall, a Savannah attorney and former member of the King's Georgia House of Commons. American botanist Stephen Elliott wrote that the rose in question had been growing on the Morton Hall plantation before the war and was also being cultivated on plantations owned by future Georgia governor Edward Telfair and brothers William (Jr.) and Barrack Gibbons (both Hall and Telfair had married into the Gibbons family). Elliott also noted that the rose was known by them as the “Cherokee Rose.”⁴

Middle: *Rosa nivea*, *Les Roses*, Vol. 2, 1821

Bottom: *Rosa laevigata*, *The Botanical Magazine*, 1828

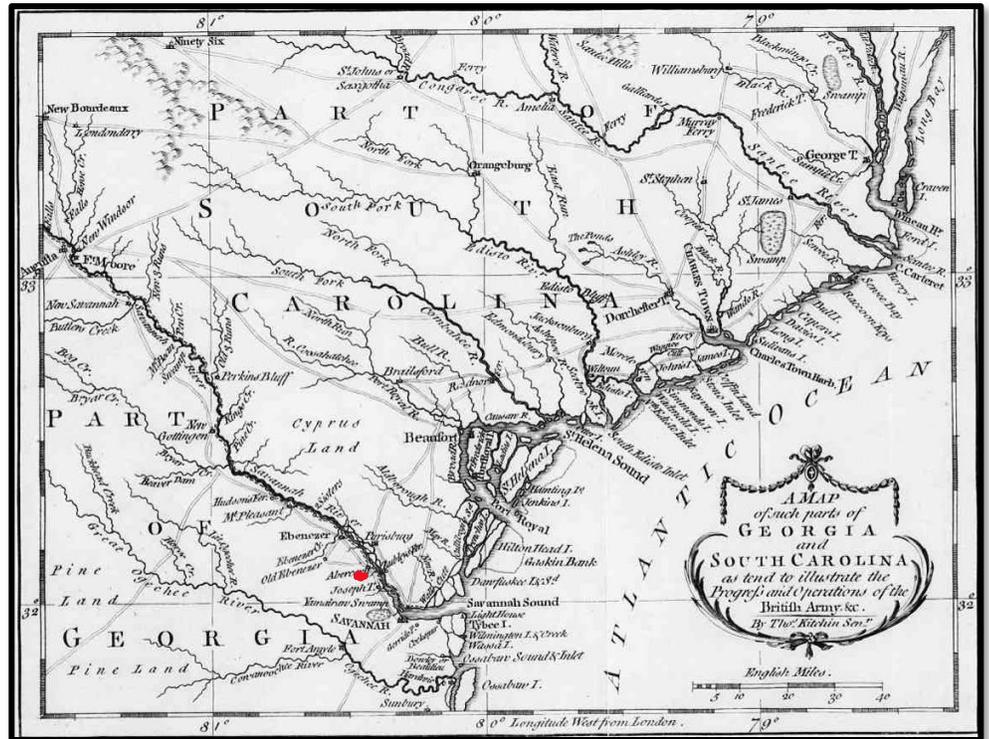
Although there is no documented reference by Michaux, it may be inferred that he observed the rose in flower on that April 1787 visit, when it would have been in bloom, recorded a description, and either collected a specimen or determined to collect one on a return trip to the plantation. What is known is that as an experienced horticulturist, and one familiar with the roses in Louis XVI's garden in Paris, he concluded that it was a new species. Stephen Elliott informs us that Michaux eventually planted the rose in his Charleston garden and began sharing it with acquaintances as an "undescribed rose." Elliott also notes that he acquired multiple plants in 1796.

Ironically, it became known in South Carolina as the "Nondescript Rose" (*Nondescript* translated from Latin means "undescribed"). Years later, Michaux named it *Rosa laevigata* in his work *Florae Boreali-Americanae*, noting that it was native to Georgia.⁵ Busy traveling and collecting, the book was not published until 1803, one year after his tragic death in Madagascar. [Ed. note; Michaux never refers to it as the "Cherokee Rose," even as a synonym.]

Englishman Nathaniel Hall settled in Savannah in 1766, nine years before the onset of war with Britain. Records indicate his brother George Abbott Hall had arrived in Charleston, SC in 1759 and immediately partnered with George Inglis and John Lloyd in a firm that bought and sold European and East-Indian goods. It would appear George's success induced Nathaniel to also immigrate and enter the same business, but in Savannah. As early as 1767 ads reveal Nathaniel Hall and Alexander Inglis, nephew of the above-mentioned Inglis, owned a mercantile firm in the city that imported and sold a variety of consumer goods - glassware, textiles, fashionable clothing, tools, and wine, as well as slaves. He purchased a tract of land roughly twelve miles north of Savannah proper in 1773 that was named Morton Hall. Due to his loyalty to the British crown, he was arrested and eventually fled to Charleston to briefly live with his brother, and then moved to Jamaica before settling in the Bahamas. Morton Hall was confiscated by the state of Georgia in 1778 and held until Hall's mother-in-law, Hannah Gibbons, purchased the property in 1783. She then sold it to her son William Gibbons, Jr.

Advertisement:

May 25, 1778 edition of the Georgia Gazette.



Map of Georgia and South Carolina ca. 1780
Red dot indicates approximate location of Morton Hall

I N G L I S and H A L L,
Have just imported,
In the ship Nancy, Capt. Jordan, and the Little Carpenter, Capt. Maitland, from London,
A QUANTITY of EUROPEAN and EAST-INDIA GOODS,
Which, together with A GENERAL ASSORTMENT of LINENS, WOOLENS, MANCHESTER and BIRMINGHAM WARES, daily expected from Bristol, will be sold at their usual low advance to such of their customers only whose punctuality in payments they can depend upon.



Camellia sinensis - tea plant

tea agent. Unfortunately, Garden's loyalty to the British crown resulted in the confiscation of his property after the war and his eventual return to Britain. His interest in plant nomenclature would lead one to expect some mention of a previously unnamed rose in his correspondence, however none is recorded.

A second alternative is potentially the most likely explanation. As Hall and Inglis were merchants that received, shipped, and marketed a diverse assortment of goods, it is entirely believable that a previously unnamed species of rose arrived on a ship that had sailed around the southern tip of Africa before crossing the Atlantic with its East-Indian cargo. Based on Elliott's remark that the "Cherokee Rose" was growing on the Morton Hall property before the war, there is a two to three-year window in which Hall may have received the rose among other goods and planted it there prior to his departure for Charleston.

Alternately he may have acquired the rose during the time he lived in the city prior to his purchase of the plantation. Records of Hall's development of Morton Hall do not exist. It is worth noting that his property was a short distance from an area known for some time as the Cherokee Hill district!

By the time Michaux's book was published *R. laevigata* was being grown by several plant enthusiasts in Savannah as the "Cherokee Rose," and in Charleston as the "Nondescript Rose." Records show that Thomas Jefferson received seeds of the "Cherokee Rose" from Savannah resident and Georgia governor John Milledge in 1804.⁸ Within a year it was also being grown in the vicinity of Philadelphia in the 300-acre Woodlands garden of William Hamilton. The aforementioned John Lyon is a possible source. He had served in an undocumented capacity as a gardener at Woodlands prior to 1799 and would assume the lead position for a year in 1805. Lyon had made a significant collecting trip to Charleston and Savannah in 1803 meeting

Several leads allow us to speculate how *R. laevigata* arrived in the New World. Without doubt it arrived via ship directly or indirectly from China. Author Paul Tabor conjectured that it may have arrived in Charleston in 1772. His evidence was based on the arrival that year of a shipment of seeds and plants that had been collected in China by John Bradley Blake, a representative of the East-India Company in Canton.⁶ An article appearing in a 1776 edition of the British publication, *The Gentleman's Magazine*, informs us that Dr. Alexander Garden of Charleston had received seeds in 1772 (shipped there by Blake's father) of several cultivars of indigo (*Indigofera tinctoria* and *Indigo suffruticosa*), seeds of the "tallow" tree (*Triadica sebiferum*) and "lacquer" tree (*Toxicodendron vernicdiftuum*), plants of *Camellia japonica* and *Camellia sinensis*, and "many others."⁷ Dr. Garden was an educated horticulturist that regularly exchanged plants and seeds with prominent botanists in Europe. And, he would have likely known Nathaniel Hall's brother George, who in addition to the aforementioned imported goods, was the East-India Company's Charleston

Rosa laevigata

Photo by Jonathan Windham

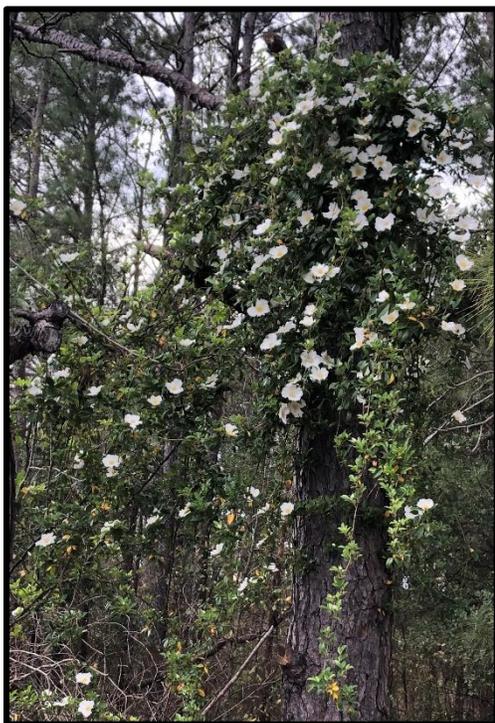


and collecting plants with Stephen Elliott and Savannah physician and plant enthusiast Dr. John Brickell. Lyon's journal notes a record of collecting specimens of "Cherokee Rose"/*R. lucida* at a Judge Clay's home on the 19th of January 1804. At the end of the month he packed his acquisitions and shipped them to Philadelphia.⁹ A second possible source for the rose's existence in the Woodlands garden is Dr. John Brickell himself. Lyon's journal informs us that Brickell was active in sending plant materials to collectors in the Philadelphia area. A rose specimen currently held in the Benjamin Smith Barton Herbarium is labeled *Rosa multiflora* Brickell. The label also notes that it was subsequently identified as *R. laevigata* and that it had been collected from the Woodlands garden. Did Brickell send plants to Woodlands or were the plants there from Lyon's collections in Georgia? Was John Lyon told by Judge Clay that his plant had been shared with him by Dr. Brickell?

Specimens of the "Cherokee Rose" were shared with Benjamin Smith Barton and Rev. Henry Muhlenberg, another noted plant Pennsylvania enthusiast, by Frederick Pursch, head gardener at Woodlands during Lyon's travels. Muhlenberg's *Catalogus Plantarum Americae Septentrionalis*, published in 1813, lists both *R. laevigata* Michaux and *R. cherokeensis* Donn separately and notes their habitats as Georgia and "Cherokee" respectively.¹⁰ Perhaps his acquisition of the rose came from two different sources and had not been adequately compared?

A third, purely speculative option, suggests the name "Cherokee Rose" has a link to America's native peoples. There is no creditable evidence for this view at present, however it bears further study if for no other reason than to put it to rest. Notes related to ongoing research into this lead will appear in a post-script following this article.

Rosa laevigata
Photo by Stephen Hoy



Rosa sinica/laevigata
Curtis Botanical Register, 1837

References to the rose as the "Cherokee Rose" in 19th century American literature continued to reinforce its usage. Frederick Pursch published his two volume *Flora Americae Septentrionalis* in 1814. His list of "native" North American rose species includes *R. laevigata* as described by Michaux with the notation that it grew in the "shady woods of Georgia."¹¹ In 1815 Dr. William Baldwin, a Savannah physician, forwarded a record of his botanical excursions in Georgia and Florida to Rev. Muhlenberg. In it he references *R. laevigata*, Mx., indicating he was familiar with Michaux's text. He notes that it was known in Savannah as the "Cherokee Rose" and as the "Nondescript Rose" in Charleston. Baldwin requested that Muhlenberg clarify the listings given in his 1813 *Catalogus* – "as the same plant is often known by different names."¹²

In 1816 the previously mentioned Stephen Elliott submitted volume one of a work eventually published as *A Sketch of the Botany of South Carolina and Georgia*. Among the roses featured is *R. laevigata*, Mich., specifically referencing Michaux's work. His comments state the rose had been cultivated in Georgia for "upwards of forty years under the name "Cherokee Rose," but that its origin [was] still obscure."¹³ In personal papers written in 1814 but not discovered until after his death in 1830, he wrote, "To the planters of this country who are beginning to suffer from want of timber, and to

those who may wish to give their plantations the improvement which permanent and impenetrable fences will certainly bestow on them, I would recommend the culture of the plant now generally known in Carolina and Georgia, by the name of the Cherokee or Nondescript Rose.”¹⁴ Mention is also made in letters written to the editor of the *American Farmer* in 1820 referring to the rose as both the “Non Descript” and “Cherokee” rose. Plantation owner Charles E. Rowand wrote that it was known in Charleston by the name “Non Descript” but believed it to be *Rosa multiflora*. He recommended it as a valuable hedging plant and offered to furnish cuttings to anyone interested.¹⁵ Dr. William W. Anderson responded several weeks later that the proper name for the rose should be “Cherokee Rose,” and repeating information read in Muhlenberg’s publication, stated that it was native to the “tract of country inhabited by the Cherokee Indians.”¹⁶ Joshua Peirce’s 1827 *Catalogue of Fruit and Ornamental Trees and Plants* offered the rose (among forty others) as the “Cherokee” or “Georgia nondescript,”¹⁷ American botanists John Torrey and Asa Grey began publishing their definitive work *A Flora of North America* in 1838. In the second half of Vol. I Torrey refers to the rose *Rosa laevigata*, Michx. and notes its widespread distribution throughout the southern states under the name “Cherokee Rose.” His access to numerous European botanical references led him to state that it was “doubtless” of Chinese origin. Additionally, Torrey offered the opinion that it is likely “too tender to endure the winter of Northern states.”¹⁸ *Prince’s Manual of the Rose*, first published in 1846, also identified the rose as *R. laevigata*, but listed “Cherokee,” “Nondescript,” and “Georgia Evergreen” as synonyms. He wryly comments, “This rose is so extensively diffused at the south and west, that many botanical writers have deemed it a native, and Mr. T. Rivers, the eminent writer on “The Rose,” falls into the same error.”¹⁹

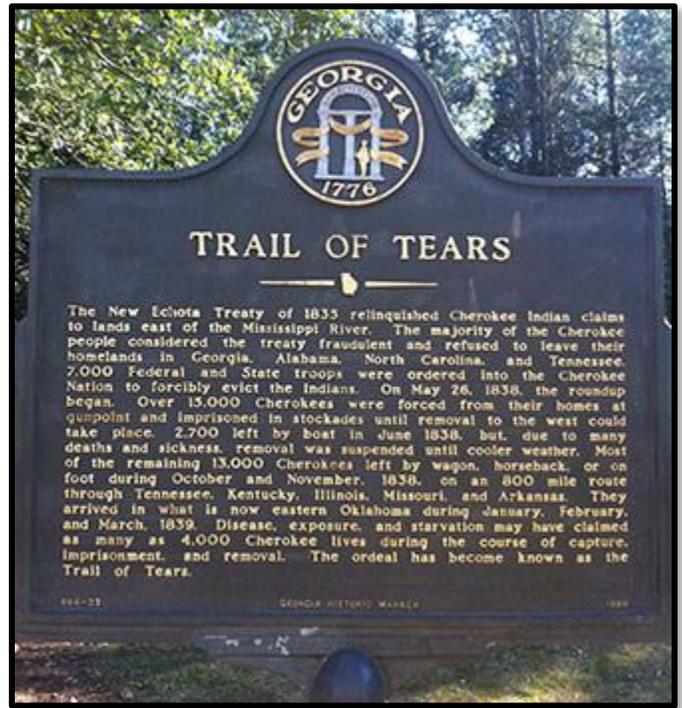
In addition to Elliott’s recommendation for using the “Cherokee Rose” as a hedging plant, several additional accounts can be found. Natchez, Mississippi resident Benjamin Wailes, a horticulture enthusiast, plantation owner, and state geologist, kept a detailed diary with several observations about the “Cherokee Rose.” He records that former resident of Charleston, SC, John B. Joor (Ioor), began utilizing it as a hedge on his Woodville, MS plantation in 1822. His cutting-grown plants almost certainly came from South Carolina. By 1852 Wailes estimated that roughly “1000 miles of “Cherokee Rose” hedges existed in the Mississippi counties of Adams and Wilkinson alone.”²⁰ Well-known horticulturist and agricultural reformer Thomas Affleck had established a nursery in Adams county in 1842. As an enthusiastic advocate for using the “Cherokee Rose” for hedging, it is highly probable that Affleck was the source for many of the plants Wailes observed. In an article appearing in the July 11, 1888 edition of *Garden and Forest* entitled “The Cherokee Rose,” Charles S. Sargent, the first director of Harvard University’s Arnold Arboretum, wrote, “There are hundreds of miles of such hedges lining the highways in different parts of the Southern States.”²¹



R. laevigata - Photo by Pat Martin, Tallahassee, FL

Stories began to appear in the latter half of the 1800's that further imbedded the name "Cherokee Rose" into the minds of those living in the southern United States. These "legends," if you will, were prompted in part by an event that occurred years earlier. Gold was discovered in 1828 in northern Georgia on land adjacent to that occupied by native Cherokee. In what can only be described as a land grab, the U.S. congress passed the Indian Removal Act in 1830, initiating the relocation of native peoples in Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, North Carolina, Georgia, and Tennessee to land west of the Mississippi River. The majority, including Cherokee, Seminole, Choctaw, Muskogee, Chickasaw, and Creek, were forcibly required, under armed escort, to leave their land. A Choctaw chief was first reported to have said that it was a "trail of tears and death."²² By 1838 only 2000 of 15-16,000 Cherokees had left. By order of president Martin van Buren federal soldiers were sent to North Carolina, Tennessee, and Georgia to "expedite" the process. Due to a host of communicable diseases and privation roughly 4-5000 people died during their forced march. Legends began to surface that associated the rose with the event as experienced by the Cherokee people. In 1869 an article was published in *The Horticulturist* touting the romanticized tale of a Cherokee maiden that fell in love with a captured Seminole warrior. Upon their escape and elopement, she returns for a keepsake – a white rose growing alongside her father's dwelling. Planted at their new home among the Seminoles it became known as the "Cherokee Rose."²³ Another legend continues to be passed along by modern-day members of the Cherokee people. As their ancestors were experiencing acute hardships on their own "trail where they cried," the elders sought divine guidance. The message from their deity promised that a white rose of five petals symbolizing their tears, with a center of gold, representing the greed of the white man for gold, would grow everywhere tears had fallen along the trail, a plant that would be sturdy and strong with stickers on the stems and able to defy anything that tried to destroy it.²⁴ There is however, one overlooked part of the story that has largely been ignored. A further characteristic of the rose as shared by the elders is that it would have leaves of *seven leaflets*, one for each of the seven clans of the Cherokee (*R. laevigata* has leaves of three leaflets).

Among home gardeners the belief that the "Cherokee Rose" was a native plant, or at least one that had become naturalized throughout the southern United States persisted into the 20th century. California plant breeder T. F. Falconer authored an article in 1908 entitled "The Cherokee Rose in California." In it he noted, "It has long run wild in our Southern States."²⁵ In 1916 the "Cherokee Rose" was adopted as the state flower of Georgia based on the belief that it was native to the state. Written into the resolution as adopted is the following phrase, "Having its origin among the aborigines of the northern portion of the State of Georgia, is indigenous to its soil, and grows with equal luxuriance in every county of the State, be it resolved that the Cherokee Rose . . . is hereby adopted and declared to be the floral emblem of the State of Georgia."²⁶





A thesis written by Dr. Charles Walker, Jr., entitled *The Cherokee Rose in the Southeastern United States: A Historical Perspective*, provides further insight into *Rosa laevigata* based on DNA study. Of twenty-four plants obtained from eight different states, analysis revealed only two clones, one predominant group showing smooth lateral stems (19 out of 24) and a smaller group showing markedly bristly stems.²⁷ Based on the understanding that seedling based clones would show greater diversity Dr. Walker concluded that, contrary to belief, the “Cherokee Rose” is not indeed naturalized, but is “persistent at [former] dwellings or at sites of deliberate planting.”²⁸ Further explaining the generally accepted belief that it has become naturalized is the fact that it has been frequently confused with *Rosa bracteata* (aka the “McCartney Rose” or “Chickasaw Rose”), whose bloom is similar and which reseeds prolifically. It is now considered an invasive species, particularly in Texas, where specimens are estimated to be extant in over 500,000 acres in the state.

The persistent and long-lasting nature of the plant and the shiny disease resistant foliage have prompted some to use *R. laevigata* in their hybridizing. Progress has been elusive. One known cultivar is ‘Anemone.’ This variety arose from a batch of seeds collected by Dr. Emil Bretschneider in the mountains north of Peking (modern day Beijing) and sent to Louis Wiesener in Paris. Wiesener wrote a letter to the *Revue Horticole* in 1889 noting he had planted the seeds in 1884 but had raised only one seedling. He reported that it first bloomed in the spring of 1889 and in all respects resembled the species except for having pink flowers.²⁹ The editors responded by encouraging Wiesener to make it available. It first appeared in commerce via a German source, J. C. Schmidt, in 1896.³⁰ It is thought to be a naturally occurring cross of *R. laevigata* and an unknown pink Tea. Dr. Charles Walker’s research demonstrated a strong relationship with *R. laevigata*.³¹

A sport of ‘Anemone’ was discovered circa 1909 in southern California by the firm of Dieterich and Turner. Interestingly, Jacob Dieterich learned the nursery/seed trade from J. C. Schmidt. The carmine-red flowered rose, originally known as “Red Cherokee,” was introduced in 1913 and named ‘Ramona.’

Top: ‘Anemone’ - Photo unattributed

Middle: ‘Ramona’ - Photo by Maurizio Uzai

Bottom: *R. laevigata rosea* -

Photo by Viru & Girija Viraraghavan

Another pink-flowered form is known in the Far East, Australia, and New Zealand as *R. laevigata rosea*. It is thought by many to be of Japanese origin. Well known rosarians Viru and Girija Viraraghavan consider it to be a species seedling and are attempting to use it in their warm weather rose breeding program.

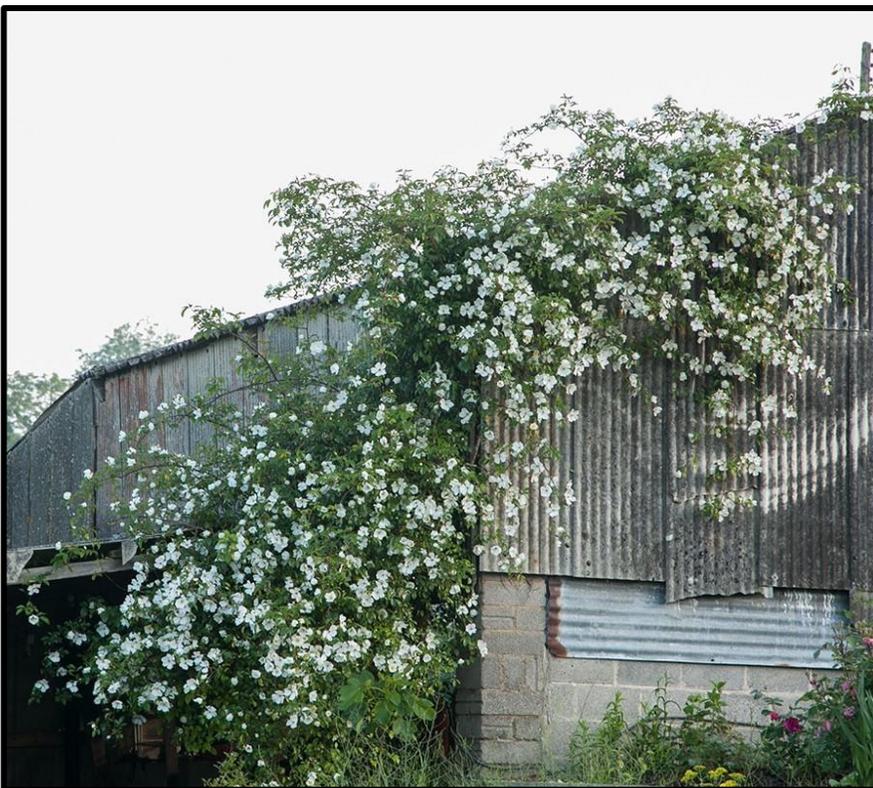
Rosa fortuniana had been introduced in Europe by Robert Fortune circa 1850. Just before the turn of the 20th century François Crépin suggested that it was a likely cross of the double white *R. banksiae* and *R. laevigata*. Early 20th century catalogs frequently listed it as the “Double White Cherokee.” Research has shown it is in fact a hybrid of the two listed parents.³² It has become a favorite rootstock for rose lovers living in temperate climates.

‘Silver Moon’ was reported by its hybridizer Dr. Walter Van Fleet to be a cross of (*R. wichuriana* x ‘Devoniensis’) x *R. laevigata*.³³ It would appear his memory failed him when writing this account. He had sold the rights to the naming and marketing of the rose, as well as the variety that would eventually bear his name, years earlier. When doing his lab research on *R. laevigata* Dr. Walker included ‘Silver Moon’ in his research because of its presumed relationship. His study led him to conclude that any relation is very unlikely.³⁴



R. fortuniana - Photo by Dawn Hauser

‘Cooper’s Burmese’
Photo by Huw Morgan



‘Cooper’s Burmese,’ is thought to be a spontaneous hybrid of *R. gigantea* and *R. laevigata*. Its origin resembles that of ‘Anemone.’ In 1921 seeds of a rose were sent by plant collector Roland Cooper from the Maymyo Botanic Garden in Burma (modern day Myanmar) to Ireland. The recipient was Lady Charlotte Wheeler-Cuffe, an accomplished amateur botanist and philanthropist. From 1897 to 1921 she and her husband, a high-ranking civil engineer for the British government, lived in Burma. Her achievements in the field of plant collecting while living there had led to an invitation to design and layout a botanic garden in Maymyo. An article appearing in a 2015 edition of *Garden History* confirmed that she collected the rose in northern Burma near its border with China and had planted it in the garden in Maymyo.³⁵ Presumably, there was some correspondence or previously made agreement for seeds to be forwarded when Cooper assumed



'Basye's Amphidiploid 86-3'
Photo by Robert Rippetoe

responsibility for the garden directly after her departure. Like *R. laevigata* it has five-petaled white flowers, shiny foliage, and grows quite rampantly, however its genetic background has not been determined in laboratory study.

Dr. Robert Basye was able to open the door to future work with *R. laevigata* in the 1980's. Using a thornless open-pollinated seedling of *R. banksiae* as the seed parent he applied pollen from *R. laevigata* and raised several seedlings. He applied colchicine to the most desirable of the seedlings to artificially double the chromosome count from 14 to 28 [a topic for another article]. His intention was to create a self-fertile tetraploid rose with the black spot resistance of the parents that could be used to produce immune or highly resistant reblooming roses. He was successful and the resulting seedling is known as 'Basye's Amphidiploid Seedling 86-3.' Dr. Robert Byrnes at Texas A&M University is using it in the ongoing breeding program there.

Many rose enthusiasts live in climates that are too cold for the "Cherokee Rose," *R. laevigata*, to survive much less thrive. Further, many do not live on

properties spacious enough to justify having a rose that grows that large. It is unlikely that we will again see what Charles Sergeant observed years ago, "There are few floral displays in this country more delightful than a long vista bordered with great masses of this graceful plant in full flower ("The Cherokee Rose," *Garden and Forest*, July 11, 1888, p. 234)."³⁶ However, its potential as a candidate to climb into a tree is intriguing – perhaps on the fringes of a wooded lot? Hmm – my daughter and son-in-law's house in Tennessee . . .



'Golden Horizon' x
'Basye's Amphidiploid 86-3'



156-1 x
'Basye's Amphidiploid 86-3'



'Lynnie' x
'Basye's Amphidiploid 86-3'

Photos & seedlings by Kim Rupert

Post-Script: European and North American Indian Interaction



Is there evidence that connects *Rosa laevigata*, the “Cherokee Rose,” to the indigenous peoples of North America, in particular the Cherokee? There are two words in the Cherokee language for “rose” – *tsist-uní gisti*, “the rabbits eat it” and *aday a kali.ski*, “to choke us,” both references to foliage.³⁷ The words are unspecific as to species and may apply to *R. virginiana*, *R. carolina*, or possibly *R. setigera*, all actually native to the southeastern U.S. The only medicinal value

recognized by the Cherokee people involved the use of its bark or roots as a cure for dysentery.³⁸

If the presupposition that its name is associated with Morton Hall’s proximity to the Cherokee Hill district is unjustifiable, then the next most plausible explanation begins with the comments made by Stephen Elliott. In noting that the rose was known as the “Cherokee Rose” he considered it possible that it had been “brought down from our mountains by some of the Indian traders.”³⁹ In a footnote he adds that an associate and fellow plant collector, Mr. Kin (Matthias Kinn), had assured him that he had found the rose near the Cumberland mountains in Tennessee on land populated heavily by members of the Cherokee people (Ibid). Kinn was a German horticulturist that arrived in America in the latter half of the 18th century. Known for primarily collecting in the southern states he was described as the “Indian plant hunter,” likely based on his having spent long stretches of living among native peoples and adopting their clothing. Specimens collected and labeled by Kinn were delivered to the gardens of friends in Philadelphia. From there they were distributed to collectors like Rev. Henry Muhlenberg and Dr. Benjamin Barton in Pennsylvania and to herbariums in Europe. That Kinn actually “found” *R. laevigata* is in doubt based on several criteria. He never became very fluent in English and what notes that exist are written in a mashup of phonetically spelled words. Further, no cumulative record of his collecting efforts exists, either in English or German. Elliott later speculated that the plant Kinn was likely referring to was *Robinia hispida rosea*, a native of mountainous regions of the southeastern U.S. commonly known as rose-acacia. It was well-known among the Cherokee peoples as a remedy for toothache. Kinn’s claim appears to be unsubstantiated.

There are accounts of seeds and plants contributed to Rev. Muhlenberg by Anna Gambold, a Moravian missionary living among the Cherokee in northern Georgia.⁴⁰ All were labeled “Cherokee,” however, there is no record of a rose in the collection of plants forwarded to the Pennsylvania herbarium. The Moravian connection was, however, reiterated by Rev. Francis Holland years later, attributing the existence of the “Cherokee Rose” in Salem, NC to Moravian missionaries that had lived not far from Civil War battle sites near the border of Georgia and Tennessee in years past.⁴¹

Can the notion of the rose having any association with either the Cherokee or other groups of indigenous peoples living in Florida, Georgia, Tennessee, or the Carolinas be dismissed out of hand? Until further research

is done the answer is not yet. Numerous academic papers associated with European contact with these civilizations during the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries suggest there is much to be learned.

Spanish explorers are known to have visited the Atlantic coast lines of Georgia and Florida and had some interaction with North American native peoples as early as the first half of the 1500's. Hernando de Soto landed on the gulf coast of Florida in 1539 and advanced northward before his expedition made its way westward across the Mississippi River and then on to Mexico. Interaction with natives often resulted in violence and most notably, fatal diseases. The Spanish landed and founded modern-day St. Augustine in 1565. One year later an expedition was led northward and although small fort/settlements were established they were just as quickly overrun or abandoned. Historians believe that peaches, introduced to native peoples by the Spanish, quickly became a part of native agriculture in Florida and Georgia during this period.⁴²

Although English settlers arrived on Virginia's coast in 1607 it was not until Virginia was established as a royal colony in 1624 that English trade with local native peoples began. By the 1650's exploration had reached the Roanoke River on the Virginia/North Carolina border and the Savannah River on the Georgia/South Carolina border. However, interaction was hampered significantly by ongoing conflict with local tribes.

In 1663 the English founded the colony of Carolina beginning with the settlement of Charles Town (modern day Charleston, SC). Travel westward was found to be much easier from Charles Town. By 1666 explorers like Henry Woodward spent years traveling throughout the southeast making noteworthy contact with Cherokees situated in western North Carolina, eastern Tennessee, South Carolina, and northern Georgia and with Lower Creeks living in central and southern Georgia (one Lower Creek settlement/English trading post was located at the Ocmulgee Indian Mounds just 20 miles from my current home). The influx of new English and Scottish traders hoping to get rich increased the scale of trade dramatically. Goods, including blankets and cloth, weapons and tools, cookware, and alcohol were traded to natives primarily for the skins of various animals, chiefly deerskins. Scholars agree that Indian trade dominated the Carolina economy during this period.⁴³ Peaches and non-native apples are thought to have reached the Appalachian Summit (the southernmost tip in North Carolina, Tennessee, and Georgia) by that time frame.⁴⁴

In late 1732 English settlers led by James E. Oglethorpe arrived on the Atlantic coast to establish a new colony to be named Georgia. After exploring southward, the bluffs overlooking the mouth of the Savannah River appeared a prime location to begin a settlement. After meeting locally established traders John Musgrove and his Creek wife Mary, they were introduced to a local chief who granted them the right to build a community that would be named after the river. Oglethorpe's vision of prohibiting slavery and of welcoming people of all faiths set a standard that fostered peaceful relations with local tribes. An early garden was established there in which grew citrus, apples, pears, olives, figs, pomegranates, and numerous plants thought to be of medicinal value.

In 1737 a Scotsman would immigrate to North America by the name of Lachlan McGillivray. His and his son's story will bring this post-script to a close. Like many traders, after arriving in Charles Town he settled at Little Tallassee, a Creek village on the Coosa River (near modern day Montgomery, AL) and married a young Creek widow. This marriage is just one of a host of often untold stories of European men that married indigenous women. While "Creolization" had been ongoing in the Caribbean islands and would be the trademark personality of American cities like New Orleans, it was also occurring with frequency in southern states. Due to the matrilineal nature of the southeastern Woodland peoples (Cherokee, Creek, Seminole, Choctaw, and Chickasaw, among others), métis (creole) children lived with their mothers. They often became tribal leaders due to the rich doweries their European fathers brought to the marriage, and would often become influential in affecting cultural change - embracing European clothing, the concept of private property, language, religious practices, foods, and farming.

After living among the Creeks and having learned their language and established himself as a successful trader, McGillivray frequently served as an intermediary between the English and his adopted Creek family in the institution of treaties and alliances. He moved his family to Augusta, GA in 1757 to reenter English society and to give his métis son, Alexander (aka *Hoboi-hili-miki*/Good Child King), greater opportunity. Several years later Alexander was sent to Charleston to receive a European education. In 1765 Lachlan and family settled on 300 acres of land just south of Savannah and entered into a merchant partnership with John Clark and brothers

John and James Graham. As a result of McGillivray's influence as South Carolina's and Georgia's foremost "Indian trader," they profited significantly in trade with both Creek and Cherokee villages and settlements throughout the southeast.⁴⁵

It is at this point that the story of the McGillivray family becomes pertinent to the idea that *Rosa laevigata* may have some connection with North America's native peoples. In 1767 Alexander went to work as an apprentice for Nathaniel Hall, the one-time owner of Morton Hall. He would go on to become the principal chief of the Creek communities near his birthplace, a special emissary on behalf of the Creek nation for the newly founded United States government, and eventually a partner in a merchant firm that benefitted from his extensive influence in the deerskin trade. It may simply be a coincidence that the McGillivray family came into contact with Nathaniel Hall on whose former property Stephen Elliott stated the "Cherokee Rose" had been growing prior to the America's Revolutionary War. Again, there is no documented or orally transmitted evidence that links the "Cherokee Rose" with America's indigenous peoples. However, the connection of families like the McGillivray's with substantial ties to a broad spectrum of Indian communities and overseas trade prompts curious minds to continue searching.

Shades of Biltmore Red

In all the universe of bloom and blossom there blushes not a flower the rival of the **R**ose. In beauty and in fragrance it stands alone, supreme, its right to reign as Queen of Flowers is now unquestioned. The spirit of sunset trembles within its petals. The purity of the dew of morning abides with it. The softness of twilight is in its cheek, and the radiance of the midday sun it holds as prisoner within its folds. Of all the blooms that ever were, or will be, not one of them may hope to instill within us the love and admiration which we bestow upon the **R**ose.

1913 Biltmore Nursery Rose Catalogue, Introduction

Roses have been one of the eminent features of the grounds at the Biltmore Estate since 1895. Quoting from that year's catalog, "For more than twenty years Biltmore Nursery has been patiently, earnestly, scientifically studying, developing and improving the Rose. The location, high up in the mountains of western North Carolina, gave the wide variation of temperature, the pure air, the ever-changing lights and shadows, the clear skies and the heavy rainfalls, so essential in bringing the Rose to perfection and in producing a strain of plants capable of retaining that perfection when transplanted to other parts of the United States (p.7)."

Located in Asheville, North Carolina, the Biltmore Estate sits on 8000 luxuriously forested acres. George W. Vanderbilt III (1862-1914), grandson of wealthy American business magnate Cornelius Vanderbilt, first visited the area in 1887. After purchasing land, construction on a 250-room residence in the style of a French Renaissance chateau began in 1889. When the Biltmore Estate was completed in 1895 Vanderbilt

engaged Frederick Law Olmsted, designer of New York's Central Park, to develop the grounds. Vanderbilt, well-known as a philanthropist, was an early American pioneer of scientific forestry practices, maintaining that "private ownership of any resource . . . carries with it the moral obligation of faithful stewardship." An avid book reader, he also studied horticulture and agriscience, developing improved breeding methods for a variety of livestock. His long-term goal was to transform the estate into one that was self-sustaining.

The Biltmore International Rose Trials were the brainchild of Paul Zimmerman. The focus of the trials, following guidelines established by the World Federation of Rose Societies, was to recognize rose introductions for their garden worthiness, fragrance, disease resistance, and adaptability to sustainable gardening practices. Covid-19 concerns forced the Biltmore Estate to discontinue the trials this past summer.

A wonderful variety of roses received well-deserved awards in the trials including three single or nearly single-flowered cultivars in vibrant shades of red! Perhaps one of the best roses introduced in years, 'Miracle on the Hudson', received numerous Biltmore awards in 2014. Its breeder, Robert Rippetoe, has been featured in an earlier edition of this newsletter for his work with the *Rosa banksiae* family. 'Miracle on the Hudson' is an example of another of his breeding goals – strong resistance to fungus diseases like black spot, powdery mildew, and rust. This dark red, eight to twelve petaled variety resulted from a 2006 cross of one of Robert's seedlings, 'Lyn Griffith,' with 'Home Run.' Robert tentatively named the rose "Bartholomew" in honor of the appointment of Bartholomew I as archbishop of the Eastern Orthodox church in 2009. The rose was then sent to Pat Henry and Bill Patterson of Roses Unlimited to be commercially introduced. Pat thought so highly of the striking flowers that appeared on the new plant that she suggested the name 'Miracle On The Hudson' to honor the miraculous survival of all the passengers of US Airways Flight 1549 after its captain successfully landed the plane on the Hudson River on January 15, 2009. She recommended the variety to me in the fall of 2011 and within a year I was touting its black spot resistance to rose friends here in the southern U.S. 'Miracle on the Hudson' was entered into the Biltmore trials and after two



'Miracle On The Hudson' - Photo by Justn12
Bed at Tyler, TX



years of evaluation it essentially swept the 2014 trials. The awards given to ‘Miracle on the Hudson’ include the William Cecil Award for Best Growth Habit, the Chauncey Biddle Award for Best Shrub, the Lord Burleigh Award for Most Disease Resistant, and the George and Edith Vanderbilt Award for Most Outstanding Rose. Quite a record! From a personal perspective this rose has some qualities in the way of stem length, thus cut flower potential, missing in varieties like ‘Knock Out’ or ‘Home Run.’ On another note, Robert has two highly recommended introductions being released in 2021 – ‘Pink Miracle’ and ‘Coral Miracle.’ Brings to mind a lyric – “All I need is a miracle . . . !”



‘Screaming Neon’ - Photo by Stephen Hoy

In 2016 Ping Lim’s ‘Screaming Neon’ was the big winner. It is, as the name implies, a radiant, blazing red in color, often with darker edges. The single-flowered blooms arrive one-per-stem and/or in small clusters. ‘Screaming Neon’ also received the William Cecil, Chauncey Beadle, Lord Burleigh, and George and Edith Vanderbilt Awards. Further hinting at its garden value, the variety is part of the Easy Elegance series of roses promoted by Bailey Nurseries as hardy, disease resistant cultivars. It shouldn’t be surprising that one of Ping’s roses would garner recognition as a superb variety, his roses have won numerous awards – ‘Love & Peace’ was an AARS winner in 2002, ‘Daydream’ won AARS recognition in 2005, and ‘Rainbow Sorbet’ also won in 2006. His ‘Yellow Brick Road’ is a glowing double-flowered yellow that is being used by hybridizers for its color and black spot resistance. I also love his ‘All the Rage’ and an older variety named ‘Golden Eye (the best Pierce Brosnan/James

Bond movie!!).’ Born in Laos and educated in Taiwan, Ping is having a significant influence on the development of great roses here in the U.S., as evidenced by a comment made by Sam McGredy when queried on the future of roses, “Go ask Ping.”

Although ‘Princess Charlene de Monaco’ was the winner of best overall rose in 2018, Chris Warner’s ‘Oso Easy Urban Legend’ won the Chauncey Beadle Award for Best Shrub and the Lord Burleigh Award for Most Disease Resistant. The parentage is ‘Pathfinder’ x ‘Knock Out.’ It is an eye-catching, vibrant red flowered rose with fifteen or so petals. The blooms are about two inches in diameter and contrast nicely with smallish dark green foliage. My plant has grown wider than tall, about twenty-four to thirty inches in height and forty inches in width. Dead-heading requires a good pair of gloves – prickles! – but ‘Oso Easy Urban Legend’ has ‘Knock Out’s ability to self-clean and rebloom quite prolifically. Chris Warner’s name should be familiar as the breeder of a number of

‘Oso Easy Urban Legend’ - Photo by Stephen Hoy



commercially successful roses. I grow two of his Hybrid Hulthemias, ‘Raspberry Kiss’/‘Eyes on Me’/‘Peace and Love’ and ‘Ringo’/‘Cyrus’/‘Eye of the Tiger’ and would love to have access here in the U.S. to more! Another that is really growing on me for its incredible black spot resistance is ‘Suñorita,’ a yellow and orange semi-double Floribunda marketed by Proven Winners. Chris began as an amateur hybridizer but has gone on to win several gold-medal Rose-of-the-Year awards.



‘Top Gun’ - Photo by Edmunds’ Roses

After the announcement was made that the trials would be discontinued I reached out to Paul Zimmerman to ask about my own entry. He indicated that awards might be given, but no decision had been made. To my surprise, in late October a post appeared on the Paul Zimmerman Rose Gardening Facebook page revealing 2020 winners. Two outstanding red roses were among those recognized. ‘Top Gun’ may already be familiar to rose growers. Its vibrant red single flowers really dazzle in the garden. ‘Top Gun’ was released by Weeks Roses in 2018 and is a cross of two of Tom Carruth’s varieties – ‘Memorial Day’ x ‘Home Run.’ A good dose of black spot resistance was passed along through ‘Home Run’ which has ‘Knock Out’ in its family tree. I happen to like the longer cutting stems of ‘Top Gun.’ Another feature which makes it a standout in the garden is apparent resistance to Rose Rosette Disease. After two years of attempting to deliberately infect it with the mite

that transmits RRD ‘Top Gun’ remained free of symptoms. This very promising variety was awarded the Chauncey Beadle Award for Best Shrub Rose.

The top award from the Biltmore trials went to a Climbing Miniature named ‘Cherry Frost.’ This 15-20 petaled brightly colored rose won not only Most Outstanding Rose in the trials, but also the Gilded Age Award for Best Climbing Rose and the William Cecil Award for Best General

Impression. It is reported to grow to a height of about 6’. The breeder, Julie Overom, is a Wisconsin resident and a member of the Rose Hybridizers Association. Her accomplishment as an amateur breeder is outstanding! Julie submitted the rose to Star Roses for testing and they introduced it in 2018 as a Shrub rose. ‘Cherry Frost’ has also won awards in the A.R.T.S trials – American Rose Trials for Sustainability. Their awards are based on performance in specific climate regions of the U.S. A rose wins a Local Artist Award if it does well in one given region. ‘Cherry Frost’ has won two 2021 Local Artist Awards – one for the Humid Subtropic climate of

‘Cherry Frost’ - Photo by Julie Overom



southern states through east Texas and one for the Mediterranean climate of California. Some regional testing sites have not submitted results yet so more Local Artist Awards may be on the way!

All the above mentioned roses are outstanding and highly recommended in my opinion. Let's hope that the pandemic will subside and trials can be resumed on the grounds of the Biltmore Estate soon.

From the Editor

Back in March of 2020 I was pulling out of the driveway of my in-law's home when I noticed a cascade of white rose blossoms trailing down from the slash pines in a neighbor's property. My father-in-law had planted the "Cherokee" roses growing there decades earlier. A few photos were taken and an idea for an article took shape. That the length and scope go beyond that normally found in rose-related "newsletters" is acknowledged.

Some reiteration of comments made in the previous edition of this newsletter feels merited. The number of sites dedicated to preserving heritage and rare rose cultivars is diminishing rapidly. The Sacramento Heritage Rose Garden has suffered from both Coronavirus restrictions on labor and poorly informed and perhaps even hostile decisions on the part of local government bureaucracies. A note in the most recent issue of *The Vintage Rose* newsletter reminds us of the difficulty of maintaining large collections of roses. I previously suggested a solution may exist in the form of encouraging like-minded individuals to become niche specialists in whatever they fancy, be it single-flowered roses, heritage roses, exhibition Hybrid Teas, or David Austin English roses. More loosely connected yet similarly minded networks are becoming increasingly needful in the view of this rose enthusiast.

Also, in need of recognition and words of approbation are the efforts of organizations attempting to promote "smart" consumer selection of roses based on adaptability to local climatic conditions and on sustainable horticultural practices. The Earth-Kind Rose Trialing Program was created by the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service to identify rose cultivars possessing outstanding landscape performance coupled with outstanding disease and insect resistance or tolerance. The roses must also be attractive in plant architecture as well as flower. The original program was conducted in Texas but has been expanded to other states in Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Minnesota, and Nebraska. See more at <https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/earthkindroses/>. The American Rose Trials for Sustainability (A.R.T.S), as mentioned in reference to 'Cherry Frost,' began in 2012. Its stated goal was to create a trialing program that identified roses that performed well under low-input conditions in regionally different climatic zones, managed by university scientists, horticulture and rose industry experts, and private sector enthusiasts with significant rose growing experience. The trials are multi-year, geographically regional, and independently conducted to ensure results that consumers can trust to be reliable. A rose that earns a high rating in one region receives a Local Artist award. Varieties that secure awards in four or more regions are designated Master Roses. Consult <http://www.americanrosetrialsforsustainability.org/> for more information.

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Singularly Beautiful Roses

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