



Roller Coaster

Singularly Beautiful Roses

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

<i>Tipo Idéale and Family: Mutabilis et al.....</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Yann Arthus-Bertrand: A Rose, A Man, A Statement.....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>My Flame of Love by Kim Rupert.....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>From the Editor.....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Contact Information & Sources.....</i>	<i>9</i>

Tipo Idéale and Family: Mutabilis et al.

Many of us have discovered a rose that to our surprise quickly becomes a favorite. The thought goes through our minds, “Why didn’t someone tell me about this rose before?” It’s usually a matter of too many choices, one of the things that make our hobby such a fantastic one. So it is with *Mutabilis*. I have been a devotee of single-flowered roses for over twenty-five years, but I’ve only grown this rose since 2004 . . . “Why didn’t someone tell me about this rose before?”

The flame-tinted buds of this single-flowered novelty open to honey yellow 3-4” flowers that transform from yellow to peach to rose to a more deeply hued purplish red. All stages of color are usually in evidence on a plant that is almost always in bloom. The abundance of flowers, which arrive in sprays and one-per-stem, creates the illusion of a fluttering mass of tropically colored butterflies, and if one gets “up close and personal” a pleasant fruity scent is detectable. Deep burgundy new foliage adds another dimension of color to this large growing disease resistant rose. In warm climates expect *Mutabilis* to grow 6’ x 6’ or larger. Although china roses are generally recommended for mild climates, this cultivar is very adaptable, as evidenced by its availability from Pickering Nurseries in Ontario, Canada.



Mutabilis (*Rhododendron austrinum* in background)

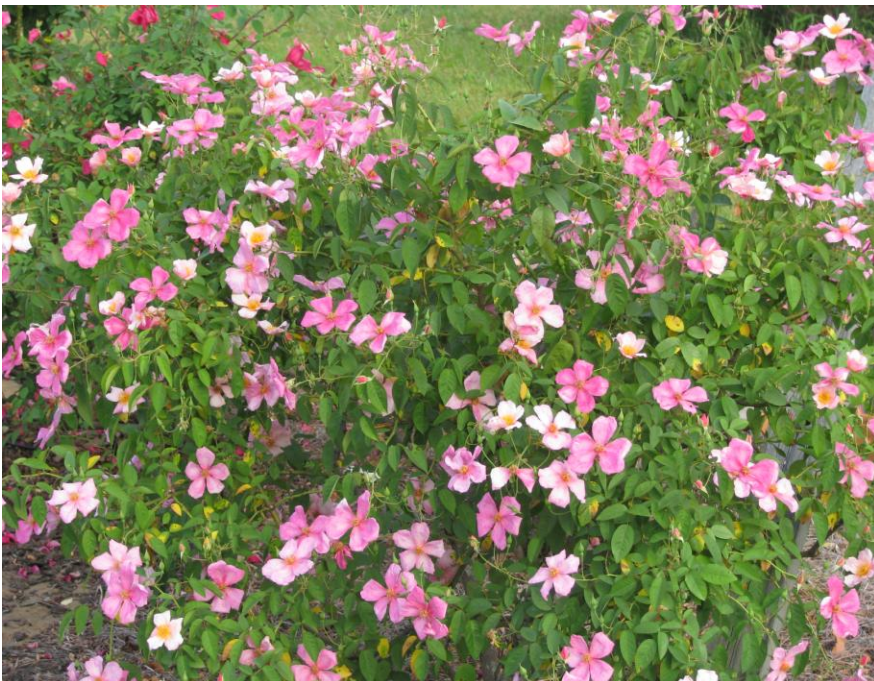
Mutabilis is registered as a hybrid china, one whose origins are shrouded in mystery. Some suggest it is a sport of *R. chinensis spontanea*, which like *Mutabilis* demonstrates the quite unusual trait of growing darker in color as the bloom ages. Some see *R. gigantea* influence. But, all agree that it is most likely a very old rose. Rose adventurers Roger Phillips and Martyn Rix believe that this mystery rose made its way from China or India by way of the French East India Company to the Isle de Bourbon (now known as Réunion). This small island 350 miles east of Madagascar is of course famous as the namesake of the original Bourbon roses. From there plants of what we now know as *Mutabilis* traveled by ship to Italy. Rose historians know it was grown there in the extravagant gardens of Prince Vitaliano IX Borromeo, an amateur botanist whose palatial villa and grounds totally encompassed Isola Madre, a small island in Italy’s Lake Maggiore. The gardens were frequently visited by Empress Joséphine de Beauharnais (and Napoleon) as roses were a prominent feature. It was Borromeo who gave the rose its first western name, *Tipo Idéale*. Borromeo’s son Giberto VI sent a specimen to an exposition in Geneva in 1894 that ended up in the hands of Swiss botanist Henri Corrévon, a well

known expert in alpine plants. Corrévon believed it to be a new species and gave it the name *R. mutabilis* (meaning “changeable”). In the ensuing thirty years this “new” rose was distributed commercially throughout Europe. (Corrévon was also responsible for propagating and popularizing a “pygmy” rose bush discovered by a friend on a cottage window ledge in Mauborget, Switzerland – *R. rouletii*. See current ARS Annual for full story.) American horticulturalist and taxonomist Alfred Rehder is credited with recognizing *Mutabilis* as a china and for changing its name to *R. chinensis Mutabilis*. By 1937 it was being sold in America by the Rutherford, New Jersey firm Bobbink & Atkins. It appears for the first time in volume 2 of *Modern Roses*, published in 1940. The first ARS annual in which I found a reference is the 1949 edition. I was amazed to find that the author lived in the town I grew up in, Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania. The article reports that it might grow to 15 inches! The official ARS exhibition name was changed to *Mutabilis* sometime between the publication of *Modern Roses* 8 and 9.



Bermuda's Kathleen: Photo Courtesy of Angel Gardens

Mateo's Silk Butterflies



Several hybridizers have worked and are working with this diploid rose hoping to create varieties with the carefree nature of *Mutabilis*. The consensus seems to be that it is a better pollen parent than seed parent. The following roses are just some of those in commerce. Some will require a bit of initiative to acquire. (See source list.)

Pink Chameleon appears to be the earliest registered hybrid of *Mutabilis*. Introduced in 1945 as a pink blend polyantha, it was a cross made by Dr. Walter Lammerts using *Mrs. Dudley Fulton* (a white single-flowered polyantha) and *Mutabilis*. The single blooms opened Venetian pink and darkened to purple. HMF reports that it is thought to be extinct.

Bermuda's Kathleen is considered by most to be a chance seedling of *Mutabilis*, but like many of Bermuda's mystery roses not much is known about its origin. It was discovered in the Bermuda garden of Hilda Horsfield sometime in the 1950's. Closely resembling *Mutabilis* in habit of growth, it undergoes a color transformation from apple-blossom pink to several darker shades of pink. As with its presumed seed parent all colors appear simultaneously. This carefree grower should not be confused with the Pemberton hybrid musk of the same name.

Mateo's Silk Butterflies was discovered by Kleine Lettunich growing under a large bush of *Mutabilis* in his California garden. Registered in 1992, this all-pink seedling was named after Mr. Lettunich's son. As the blooms open they proceed from pale pink to medium pink. Their size and texture are similar, clearly linking it to its seed parent. The volume of bloom and habit of growth also closely resemble that of *Mutabilis*. In contrast, the foliage is leathery and olive green.

Plaisanterie ('Pleasant Valley') is the result of a cross made in 1996 by Belgian hybridizer Louis Lens using the hybrid multiflora *Trier* and *Mutabilis*. Several seedlings resulted but this rose seems to have received more attention and greater distribution. It is a large growing rose with smallish yellow flowers edged in pink. The foliage is healthy and bloom is continuous. It was registered with the ARS in 2000. It is going in my garden this spring!

The Active was hybridized by New Zealander Ken Nobbs, a former missionary to Sudan. A co-founder of Heritage Roses, New Zealand, Mr. Nobbs named a number of his roses after pioneer settlers of New Zealand. *The Active*, introduced in the 1990's, was named after a ship of the same name that brought a number of families to the islands in 1814. The rose is a carefree grower, very vigorous and free blooming. The buds of this single-flowered rose are tinted orange on the petal edges, open to fragrant apricot yellow flowers, and finally fade to white. There seems to be some uncertainty as to whether this variety is actually a seedling of *Mutabilis*, but an email from Lloyd and Ann Chapman, original owners of New Zealand's Trinity Farm, confirmed that Mr. Nobbs' records list *Mutabilis* as the seed parent. Although he filled out the necessary forms to register the rose it appears he never actually got around to it. *The Active* is not currently available in the U.S. (See note about Trinity Farm in Sources!)

Rayon Butterflies is a self-pollinated seedling of *Mateo's Silk Butterflies*. Many people will recognize the name Kim Rupert – this rose's hybridizer. His roses have found their way into the gardens of a wide spectrum of



Plaisanterie: Photo Courtesy of Cassandra Bernstein



The Active: Photo Courtesy of Karen Piercy of Trinity Farm, New Zealand

friends and fellow rose enthusiasts. He shares willingly and generously. Like many of Kim's roses this one is healthy and easy to grow. It closely resembles its parent in color and habit of growth. Its availability is uncertain.

Bermuda Yellow Mutabilis was discovered in the Bermuda garden of Jean Watson. After seeing it at a 1999 rose show Mrs. Ronica Watlington was given permission to take the entry home to "slip." It was a fortuitous decision because when Ms. Watson moved from Bermuda her garden was destroyed to build a pool. In 2004 Mrs. Watlington took a bloom to a lecture series hosted by the Bermuda Rose Society. She recalls that one of the speakers that day (which included Ann Bird, Charles Walker, and Malcolm Manners) encouraged her to register the rose. Almost identical to *Mutabilis* in foliage characteristics, growth and habit, the buds, streaked orange-red, open lemon-yellow with petals sometimes tinged with pale peach. As the blooms age, they transition from pale yellow, to white, and then to pale pink. Although available to European rose growers from Peter Beales' Roses since 2008, *Bermuda Yellow Mutabilis* has just been imported to the U. S. by Vintage Gardens (where it will clear quarantine in 2013). In Bermuda this lovely sport of *Mutabilis* is grown in the Waterville Repository Rose Garden and in numerous residential gardens thanks to the efforts of a true rose lover!

Chireno is a 2002 introduction hybridized by Ray Ponton. Mr. Ponton, one of the original members of the Texas Rose Rustlers, has extensively used the "found" rose *Katy Road Pink* (now known to be *Carefree Beauty*) in his hybridizing. Crossing it with *Mutabilis* produced a large, cerise pink seedling. Not only are the flowers large, the bush will grow to 4-5' in height and width (larger in zone 9 gardens). Its two Earthkind parents have produced a plant with the health one would expect.

Buttercream is one of Robert Neil Rippetoe's roses. Mr. Rippetoe has made a splash with a number of varieties in recent years using some unusual parents including *R. banksia*. Hybridized in 2003 and introduced in 2006, this rose is a volunteer seedling of *Mutabilis* that is compact growing, with semi-glossy green foliage and semi-double blooms of soft apricot fading to white. As expected, it is healthy and easy to grow. It is registered as a hybrid china.

Bermuda Yellow Mutabilis:
Photo Courtesy of

Liesbeth Cooper, Bermuda Rose
Society



Yellow Mutabilis: Photo Courtesy of
Maurizio Usai





*Chireno: Photo
Courtesy of Carol Green*



*Buttercream: Photo
Courtesy of Robert Rippetoe*

Editor's Note: In lieu of a formal bibliography, I would like to acknowledge a very important written source and several very generous and knowledgeable individuals. Helene Pizzi's article, "The Unsolved 'Mutabilis' Mystery," published in the Autumn 1998 Journal of The Royal National Rose Society's Historic Roses Group, provided the most definitive account of the history of this china rose through the early 20th century. Thanks to Peter Harris for Bobbink & Atkins catalog information, to Karen Piercy and Ann & Lloyd Chapman for Ken Nobbs information and photos, to Mrs. Ronica Watlington, Clare Russell & Liesbeth Cooper of the Bermuda Rose Society for photos and information, and to Pam Greenwald, Carol Green, Robert Rippetoe, Maurizio Usai, and Cassandra Bernstein for wonderful photos.



THERE ARE "BARBARIANS" WHO EXPECT EVERY ROSE TO BLOOM ALL THE TIME AND BE AS LARGE AS PAUL NEYRON. LET US GRADUATE OUT OF THAT CLASS AND INTO THE ONE WHERE WE KNOW THE PECULIAR AND INTIMATE CHARM OF EACH ROSE OF THE GARDEN AND WHERE WE ARE EVEN READY TO TRY TO DISCOVER THE BEAUTY OUR NEIGHBOR FINDS IN HIS FAVORITE ROSE.

-1930 ARS ANNUAL

Yann Arthus-Bertrand: A Rose, A Man, A Statement

This past spring I purchased a rose from EuroDesert Roses that was completely unknown to me. It was something new, it was single-flowered, and a unique blend of colors. When it arrived (along with several others!) it was potted up and placed in my grow-it-on area. I noted that the foliage was healthy, and the color of the first bloom was indeed as pictured. Not long after, I received one of those emails we all get advertising “Amazing photos!” Frequently I delete these emails, but for some reason I opened the email and attachment and found that the photos really were amazing. At the end of the slide show I noticed the name of the photographer. The wheels started turning, “Isn’t that the name of . . . ?” I walked out to the garden and looked at the tag on my young EuroDesert rose and indeed it was - *Yann Arthus-Bertrand*.

Yann Arthus-Bertrand was introduced in 2007 by Meiland and is registered as an orange blend shrub. Its 2.5-3” flowers are a color riot of coppery pink and yellow. Pronounced red venation is often a prominent feature of newly opened blooms. As the flowers age the pink overpowers the orange. Maroon filaments topped with gold anthers provide a stark but attractive contrast. Stick your nose into the blooms and a faint citrusy/orange scent is detectable. The foliage is glossy medium green and the plant is predicted to grow about 3’ in height. Its ADR designation is a testament to the health and vigor it exhibits in the garden.

The gentleman for whom the rose is named is a French photographer and environmental proponent. After spending several years living in Kenya he decided to specialize in aerial and wild life photography. In 2000 he created a Paris exhibit of over 150 4’ x 6’ poster-sized photos entitled “Earth From Above.” It consisted of pictures taken from helicopters and hot-air balloons of breathtaking landscapes from every corner of the earth. After the exhibit traveled world-wide it was made into a book in 2008. Arthus-Bertrand is also the founder of Good Planet, an organization dedicated to promoting environmental awareness and sustainable development. His latest project is a documentary style feature film released in 2009 entitled “Home.” It focuses on the ecological challenges and environmental concerns facing planet Earth. The film is available in a number of formats and can be viewed on-line at www.home-2009.com/. Amazing photos indeed!



Yann Arthus-Bertrand:
Photo Courtesy of Kathy Strong

Yann Arthus-Bertrand:
In my Georgia garden



My Flame of Love by Kim Rupert

(Originally published Akron Rose Rambler, February, 1993; republished with permission of author)

I really love roses – virtually all aspects of growing and appreciating them. I think, though, that my favorite part is the hunt. The roses I enjoy the most are the ones I have read about and then had to search for, and I mean REALLY search! The Coffee Roses were the first hunt, followed by the Striped Hybrid Teas, and I have truly delighted in them. Single-petalled Hybrid Teas have been another fun hunt, and that brings us to the point of this story.

Several years ago, I was fortunate to be able to trade plants with one of the most well known rose gardens in Southern California, Rose Hills. Their bed of single-petalled contained a name plate for a rose called *Flame of Love*, but there was no plant and no one could tell me anything about it. *Modern Roses* wasn't any help as *Flame of Love* was never registered. What to do? I asked everyone I could think of if they had ever heard of it. The lone marker remained my only reference.



Flame of Love

Then it hit me! Probably the best source of information I could want was already in my possession. I began searching through my back issues of Bev Dobson's *Combined Rose List* (now edited by Bev Dobson and Peter Schneider), and found that *Flame of Love*, a medium red hybrid tea, was offered in 1986 by Rose Acres, Muriel Humenick's wonderful collection of classic and esoteric roses in Diamond Springs, California. I wrote her asking about it and was thrilled when she replied that she did have one plant of it available just waiting for someone to request it, and now it was mine! She had received hers from Mr. Jim Kirk, who had been the rosarian at Rose Hills in the early 1970's. All she could relate was that a Mr. Forrest Hieatt had hybridized it in the early 1950's, and had given it

to Mr. Kirk, and he in turn shared it with her. She sent me the plant and I eagerly awaited the first bloom.

The little plant grew well, but when its first bud appeared and developed into a fragrant, well formed, high-centered, silvery lavender bloom, I was a bit perplexed. Muriel and I conferred and decided it was actually *Silver Star*, a beautiful rose, but not the one which I had sought. She apologized and assured me that my plant was still there and would be dispatched in the spring. I tried not to seem disappointed about having to wait. Muriel obviously understood and said she would mail it to me in a day or two. My roses arrived in great shape, as everything I had bought from Rose Acres every year before had, and was potted in a five gallon can to protect it from the rabbits.

Meanwhile, I attempted to learn what I could about the latest addition to my already crowded collection of single-petalled. Muriel suggested I write to Jim Kirk, as he would be about the only person who could shed some light on the

rose. Mr. Kirk kindly responded that Forrest Hieatt was indeed the creator of *Flame of Love*. He presented ten bushes at the San Diego Rose Society to the person who could give it the best name, that honor going to Mrs. Mabel Pillsbury. Unfortunately, Mr. Hieatt died tragically in 1957 or 1958, when, on his way home from a rose society meeting, he stepped from the bus on El Cajon Boulevard in San Diego, and was accidentally run over by one of the members, who was driving home from the meeting.

Modern Roses 5 shows that Forrest Hieatt had registered four roses between 1927 and 1953: *Edmund M. Mills*, 1927, a very fragrant, rosy-flame hybrid tea named for the well-known 20th century American rosarian; *San Diego*, 1937, a very fragrant, apricot and buff hybrid tea; *Sweet Memorie*, 1937, a pink hybrid tea, again described as very fragrant; and *Miss Kate Sessions*, 1953, a pink and white large-flowered climber named for the early California plantswoman. Mr. Kirk isn't able to shed any light on the parentage of *Flame of Love* as he says Forrest Hieatt never labeled anything.

Flame of Love's first year in my garden was a difficult one. It was inundated by nearly three times normal rainfall; stunted by the coldest, wettest spring in memory; blistered by extreme summer temperatures which arrived as suddenly as if they had been turned on by a switch; used as a rabbit smorgasbord; and blown about by the fury of our Santa Ana winds bringing desiccation and now quite low temperatures. It's been a struggle, but it has generously given its nearly five inch, brilliant red, five-petalled blooms with their bright yellow petal bases, red stamen and yellow pollen. I've even noticed it has a sweet fragrance. It's a little sad to have such an enjoyable search come to an end, but this beautiful rose and the making and renewing of old rose friendships all make it great fun. Thank you Bev, Muriel, and Jim Kirk!

1997 note: *Flame of Love* is still in the garden. It is every bit as beautiful a rose as I had originally thought. The growth habit, foliage, peduncles, prickles, sepals and the wiry, flexible stems lead me to believe it has a strong dose of *Charlotte Armstrong's* genes in it. The brilliance of the flowers softens after a day or so in the hot sun, but the colors remain clean and pleasant until petal drop. It's still a favorite!

From the Editor:

By now most of us have been rocked by the news of the financial struggles and/or closing of favorite rose nurseries. My eyes were opened regarding J & P and Weeks Roses this past fall at the ARS National Convention in Atlanta. The changes in the wholesale rose industry have been dramatic. I can remember when my in-laws' small nursery sold almost a thousand #3 gallon rose bushes every year. Now there are no nurseries in Middle Georgia except the big box stores that sell anything but the "Knockout" series of roses. Rose preferences have changed, pesticide/fungicide use has drawn considerable negative attention, and finite-sized yards, and age/health related issues have relentlessly demanded reality checks. There are hardly any roses that the average home owner can call by name any more. Unfortunately, every time a rose nursery closes some variety disappears from commerce.

Having said this please look at the list of sources for the roses mentioned in this newsletter and patronize them. I encourage you to support HelpMeFindRoses.com and also to consider purchasing another very useful resource – *The Combined Rose List*. I just got my postcard from Peter Schneider several weeks ago.

Thanks to Kathy Strong for her wonderful photo of *Yann Arthus-Bertrand!*

Contact Information: Stephen Hoy, Editor; hoy127@cox.net; Please feel free to the newsletter with friends. Please respect the rights of photographers who have kindly given permission to publish their photo.

Sources:

Angel Gardens – *Bermuda's Kathleen; Mutabilis*

Antique Rose Emporium - *Bermuda's Kathleen; Mutabilis*

Asidown Roses – *Buttercream*; yes they are closed, but Paul still has some roses and is sharing with Rogue Valley Roses.

Chamblee's Nursery – *Chireno; Mutabilis*

EuroDesert Roses – *Yann Arthus-Bertrand*

Rogue Valley Roses – *Plaisanterie; Bermuda's Kathleen; Mateo's Silk Butterflies*

Roses Unlimited – *Flame of Love; Mateo's Silk Butterflies; Mutubalis*

Trinity Farm - *The Active*; in New Zealand which does not export to the US; please plan a visit on your next trip down under.

Current owner Karen Piercy was very kind to share photos!

Vintage Gardens – *Flame of Love; Yellow Mutabilis* appeared on their website Dec 2010 as part of a group of recently imported roses. Shipping will begin in spring of 2013.



Forrest Hale: a Ruffles 'n Flourishes seedling (Mini)

Lindsey's Laugh: a Carefree Beauty seedling (Shrub)



An unnamed Britannia seedling (Polyantha)



Lillian Dauby: a Tomboy seedling (Miniflora)

