



'Else Poulsen'

Singularly Beautiful Roses

*A Publication Dedicated to Single,
Nearly Single, and Semi-Double Flowered Roses
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Poulsen's Polyantha Hybrids

When we think of rose dynasties the names Dickson, Cant, Kordes, Meiland, McGredy, and many others quickly come to mind – all businesses still in operation after more than a hundred years of marketing and selling roses. Another name that must be added to the list is Poulsen. The patriarch of the family, Dorus Theus Poulsen (1851-1925), launched the family business, a small market nursery specializing in fruits and vegetables, near Copenhagen, Denmark in 1878. A highly educated horticulturist, the elder Poulsen became a seed specialist and an expert in conifers, ornamental trees, and shrubs. By the early 1900's the nursery offered over two hundred and fifty varieties of flower seeds and had made important horticultural contributions to public gardens and arboretums in Denmark. Sons Dines, Poul, and Svend all eventually joined in the enterprise. When the family began hybridizing roses around 1909 the immediate goal was to create varieties that could survive Denmark's rather long Scandinavian winters. While many of the quickly growing class of Hybrid Teas lacked hardiness in their climate the dwarf Polyanthas provided a perfect pallet to work from. Initially, three were chosen - 'Mme. Norbert Levvasseur' (1903), 'Mrs. W. H. Cutbush' (1904), and 'Orléans Rose' (1909). By crossing these with select Hybrid Teas the family crafted a new type of rose, one with the hardiness, profusion of bloom, and extended flowering season of the Polyanthas with the larger flowers and scent of the Hybrid Teas.

After spending a brief period of time in Germany working with rose hybridizer Peter Lambert, the oldest son, Dines (1879 -1940) returned to Denmark to expand the family business in Kvistgård, north of Copenhagen. One of his earliest rose creations was 'Ellen Poulsen,' (1911) a cross of 'Mme. Norbert Levvasseur' and 'Dorothy Perkins' and named for his sister. It was a compact growing pink rose that uniquely blended the *R. multiflora* heritage of its seed parent with *R. wichuraiana* characteristics from its pollen parent (evident in the bright, shining foliage). However, it was still very much a dwarf Polyantha. One year later it was followed by the cherry red flowered 'Rödhätte (Danish for Red Riding Hood).' Again 'Mme. Norbert Lavvasseur' was the seed parent, but in this instance crossed with 'Richmond,' a red Hybrid Tea. It was their first true Polyantha Hybrid. After winning gold medals at an exhibition in Hamburg in 1913 both roses went on to become extremely popular in Scandinavia and Germany planted extensively in public parks and gardens. Several additional cultivars were introduced in the next few years, including 'Harriet Poulsen' (1912?) and 'Grethe Poulsen' (1916), but the advent of World War I made it extremely difficult to market new varieties outside of Denmark.

Upper right: D. T. Poulsen

Center right: 'Ellen Poulsen' photo by Kim Rupert

Lower right: 'Rodhatte' photo by George Zlebick

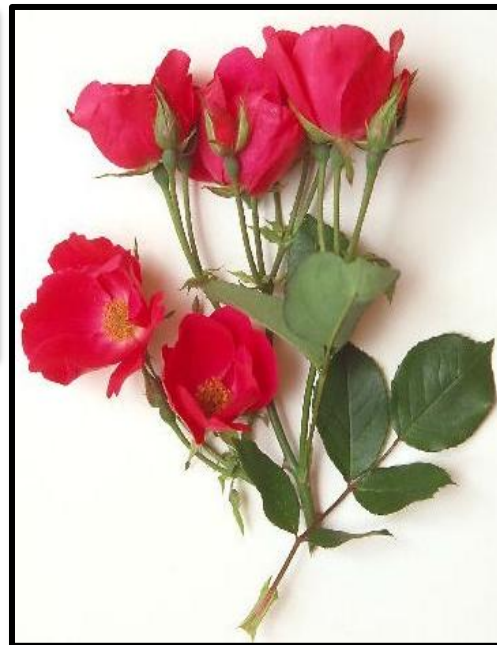




'Else Poulsen'
Painting by J. Kaplicka



Kirsten and Else
1936 ARS Annual



'Kirsten Poulsen'
Photo courtesy of Rogers Roses

In 1914 Dines turned the hybridizing responsibilities over to his youngest brother Svend (1884-1974). But, because of the hardships of the war it would be nine long years before the Poulsens were able to travel to England and exhibit their new seedlings. In a 1923 National Rose Society exhibition in London, two of Svend's hybrids were exhibited for the first time – 'Else Poulsen,' rose pink in color and having ten or so petals, and 'Kirsten Poulsen,' cherry red and single. The sister seedlings were from a cross of the Polyantha, 'Orléans Rose,' and 'Red Star,' a semi-double red Hybrid Tea. Both were rather tall, reliably hardy, and had the larger flowers they hoped for – a fulfillment of their hybridizing goals. Their ability to create a mass of color when used in large plantings was remarkable adding significantly to their popularity. They instantly imparted a measure of inspiration to hybridizers throughout Europe and Scandinavia and would eventually impact America as well.

Despite the fact that both roses were somewhat difficult to utilize as parents their popularity validated the Poulsen vision and inspired Svend to continue creating Polyantha Hybrids. In 1930 he released 'D. T. Poulsen,' named for his father. A cross of 'Orléans Rose' and the single-flowered Hybrid Tea 'Vesuvius,' this very hardy rose possessed jam-packed clusters of deep red semi-double flowers. Two years later came one of my favorite Poulsen varieties, 'Karen Poulsen,' a seedling of 'Kirsten Poulsen' x 'Vesuvius.' It was awarded a Gold Medal in 1933 at a National Rose Society show in London. Svend described it (rather effusively) in the 1938 ARS Annual; "Single-flowered, with five petals, it produces dense broad clusters with as many as fifty blooms in each cluster. It is somewhat lower and more compact in growth than its mother 'Kirsten Poulsen,' and the flowers are bigger. 'Karen Poulsen' is an excellent bedder, with its intense dazzling scarlet color, which does not fade in the sun, and will no doubt come to take the place of many annual bedding plants (p. 55)."

'Karen Poulsen'
Photo by Kathy Strong





In 1935 'Anne-Mette Poulsen' was introduced. Named for Dines' youngest daughter, the fifteen petalled rose was vibrant red in color highlighted by vivid golden yellow stamens. It was followed by another Gold Medal award winner in 1937, 'Poulsen's Yellow,' the first true yellow Polyantha Hybrid. Its pollen parent, the Pernetiana/Hybrid Foetida, 'Gottfried Keller,' brought a double dose of *R. foetida persiana* to bear on the breeding. Although the yellow color of the semi-double blooms faded quickly it was highly regarded for its wonderful fragrance, healthy foliage, and vigorous habit of growth.

'Poulsen's Pink,' a light pink and yellow semi-double variety was released in 1939, followed several 1940 introductions - 'Poulsen's Fairy,' a very floriferous pale pink seedling of 'Dainty Bess,' 'Poulsen's Copper,' a double flowered pinkish orange cultivar, and 'Nina Poulsen,' a medium red semi-double. However, the invasion of nearby Finland by the Soviet Union in 1939 and the outbreak of

World War II would limit the distribution of Poulsen roses for the next decade. In a letter dated January 20, 1940 (*1940 ARS Annual*, p. 170, 171) Svend, by then a frequent correspondent with the ARS's Dr. Horace McFarland, expressed his concerns about the impact of the war;

"Dear Dr. McFarland: I thank you for your letter of November 7, 1939, which I received in the middle of December. I have, however, not been in the mood for writing, being in rather low spirits on account of the war condition in Europe, the Russian invasion of Finland, and the consequences it may have for our Scandinavian countries, and perhaps for the whole world."

Further in the letter he expressed his views regarding the character and function of Polyantha Hybrids.

"Indeed, the beauty of the Hybrid Polyantha, as I see it, lies in its loosely built or single flowers and its broad panicles. . . I think it is important to keep in mind that the Hybrid Polyanthas must be suited for the functions they have to fulfill. They serve best as hedges, in borders along shrubberies, as massed plantings among perennials in herbaceous borders, and last, but not least, for massed planting in town gardens, parks, cemeteries, and large gardens, where, with their continued wealth of flowers, they give better results than any other type of rose."

Upper left - 'Anne-Mette Poulsen'
Center left - 'Poulsen's Yellow'
Lower left - 'Poulsen's Pink'

Photos by George Zlebick

In 1948 the Poulsen family was able to resume the marketing of their roses. 'Poulsen's Delight' (also known as 'Fru Julie Poulsen,' single, light pink) and 'Poulsen's Bedder' (light pink, upright growing, semi-double) were released that year followed in 1949 by 'Poulsen's Crimson' (deep crimson, nearly single), 'Danish Gold' (canary yellow, semi-double), and another of my favorites, the single flowered 'Poulsen's Pearl.' The latter's pearly pink petals are offset by beautiful maroon shaded stamens. The sprays produced by this 'Else Poulsen' seedling can be quite impressive.

The orange yellow 'Sun Dance,' awarded a Gold Medal in London in 1954, was one of the last of his introductions to conform to the single/semi-double look of many of the earlier Poulsen Polyantha Hybrids. Svend continued breeding into the early 1960's; the very popular red flowered 'Nina Weibull,' introduced in 1962, was his last.

His son Niels Dines Poulsen (1919-2003) joined the Poulsen family business in 1954 and continued to guide the firm towards commercial success with the release of the Gold Medal winning 'Chinatown.' He also carried on the tradition of naming roses for the women of the family. In 1965 he released 'Pernille Poulsen,' named for his daughter, a salmon pink variety of twenty or so petals. Pernille joined the family business, along with her husband Mogens Oleson, in 1974. Over sixty million roses a year are now produced via license from Poulsen Roser A/S in more than fifty countries.

The Polyantha Hybrids were to have a dramatic influence on the rose growing world and upon rose hybridizers. As early as the late 1930's this relatively new class of rose was beginning to make inroads on the popularity of the Hybrid Teas, especially in Britain, Germany and the Scandinavian countries. Wilhelm Kordes commented in a letter to Dr. McFarland, "We grow annually from twelve to fifteen million roses and almost two thirds of them are Polyantha Hybrids (1938 *ARS Annual*, p. 56)." Within the next two decades continued interbreeding with the Hybrid Teas began to transform the class broadening the color range and adding to the petal count. Double flowered varieties with Hybrid Tea form began to supplant the single and semi-double flowered hybrids that once defined the class. In America a new name for the class was suggested and although some argued for distinguishing between them based on "type" the term Floribunda was applied across the board. Although at present the sheer number of double flowered varieties far exceeds the number of single and nearly singled flowered ones, the popularity of some that have survived the test of time and the emergence of newer cultivars that have achieved international acclaim speaks volumes regarding their value as colorful exclamation points - ambassadors of color - in the garden.



Clockwise from upper right:

'Poulsen's Delight'

'Poulsen's Bedder'

Photo by Gabor Boronkay

'Danish Gold'

Photo courtesy of Rogers Roses

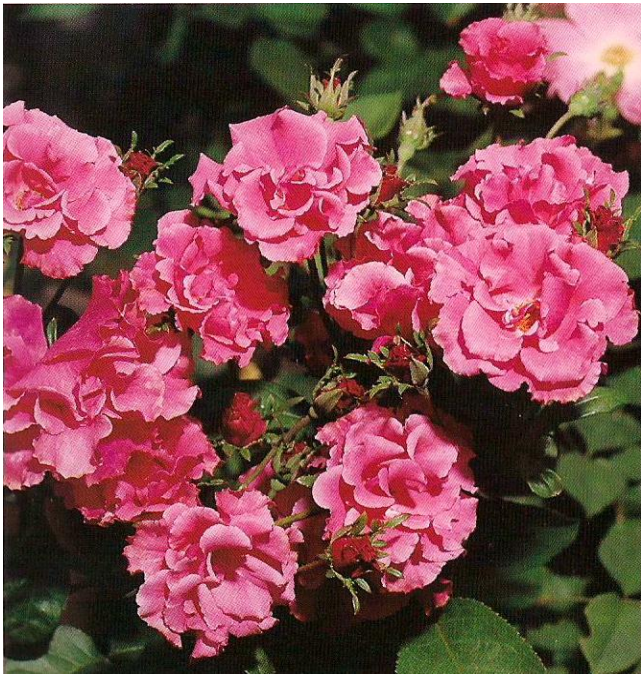
'Poulsen's Pearl'

Photo by Stephen Hoy

Pernille and Mogens Oleson
Poulsen Roser A/C

A Who's Who of rose hybridizers influenced to some extent by the vision and labor of the Poulsen family and some single and nearly single-flowered floribundas demonstrating that influence. The impetus to introduce these roses was most likely impacted directly by the commercial success of the early Polyantha Hybrids.

Wilhelm and Reimer Kordes, Mathias Tantau, E. B. Iegrice, Donald Prior, William Archer, Jack Harkness, Sam McGredy IV, Francis Meiland, Gene Boerner, Herb Swim, and Gordon Von Abrams



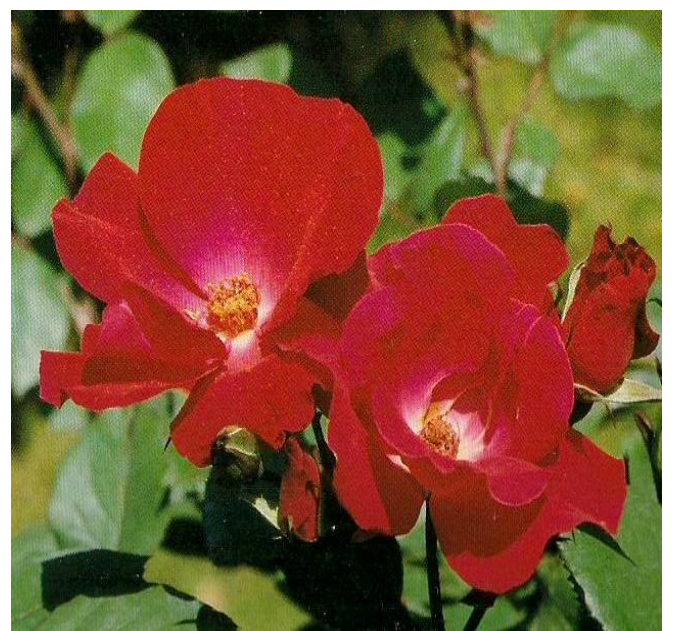
'Permanent Wave'



'Betty Prior' Photo by Aurelija Drevel



'Folkestone' Photo by G. Shellrude



'Holstein'



From upper left:

'Donald Prior'
Photo by Sue Brown

'Dusky Maiden'
Photo by Stephen Hoy

Bottom center:
'Cocorico'
Photo by Stephen Hoy



From upper right:

'Dainty Maid'
Photo courtesy of
David Austin Roses

'Firecracker'
Photo by
Stephen Hoy



Left:
'Sarabande'
photo by
Cliff Orent



Right:
'Ivory
Fashion'
photo by
Stephen Hoy



Left:
'Anna
Wheatcroft'
photo by
Stephen Hoy



Right:
'Golden
Slippers'
photo by
Stephen Hoy



Left:
'County Fair'



Right:
'Escapade'
Photo by
Stephen Hoy

A few interesting facts about the Poulsen family;

Around 1950 Niels Poulsen introduced a new cultivar of arborvitae that has gained international recognition, *Thuja occidentalis* 'Smaragd' (also known as 'Emerald' or 'Emerald Green').

Sam McGredy IV dedicated his book *A Family of Roses*, written in 1971, to Niels Poulsen. It contains a wealth of anecdotes, some quite humorous, about Sam's interaction with many of the world's greatest hybridizers. The following is a brief excerpt to whet your appetite. "Poulsen's was the dominant firm with those roses [polyanthas/early floribundas] in the thirties. Else Poulsen, a very famous rose, is still grown after all this time – I saw a big bed of it glowing cherry-pink in the sun outside Cairo airport not very long ago. Else Poulsen, Karen Poulsen, Kirsten Poulsen are all roses named after the girls of the family – I never saw a family with so many beautiful girls. Poulsen's is a big firm, big not only in rose-growing in Scandinavia, but also in breeding fruit trees. Niel's father – 'Uncle Svend' to us – bred cherry trees and people laughed at him for taking on something so long term. Now Niels has magnificent varieties of cherry trees, which he has planted all over Europe, and he is doing very well with them. . . The first time I came to Copenhagen, Uncle Svend met me. Although he now denies it vehemently, he took me straight to Tivoli Gardens to see what beer and schnapps would do to the new boy from Ireland. I passed the test. . ." (p. 75)

Flowers leave their fragrance on the hand that bestows them.

Exploring the Explorers

In a previous edition of *Singularly Beautiful Roses* I featured a Canadian bred rose, 'Spirit of Canada,' the work of hybridizer and Ontario resident Joyce Fleming. Is it somewhat ironic that a rose grower gardening in Climate Zone 8b has roses primarily associated with cold tolerance in his garden? Yes, but another feature of many of the Canadian bred roses is a fairly low maintenance factor – which brings me to the rose featured in this article.

The nation of Canada has a long standing history associated with the creation of roses suited to their harsh winters. Dr. William Saunders as Director of the Experimental Farms network introduced several roses at the beginning of the 20th century, most notably the yellow Hybrid Rugosa 'Agnes,' a cross of *R. rugosa* Thunb. and *R. foetida persiana*. Isabella Preston created at least twenty hardy rose varieties from 1920 through 1946, many named after Canada's native Indian tribes. Starting in 1961 Dr. Felicitas Svejda continued the work begun by her predecessors. Using a number of roses, including *R. rugosa* and hybrids derived from *R. kordesii*, she began hybridizing a series of roses known as Explorer Roses, named after individuals that played a role in exploring the vast land mass of Canada.

One of those explorers was Simon Fraser (1776-1862). Born into a Loyalist family in northern New York the family moved to Canada to avoid post Revolutionary War anti-British sentiment. After becoming a partner in the Montreal based North West Company in 1801 he undertook several explorations designed to increase fur-trading opportunities and to discover a navigable travel route across the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific Ocean. After establishing several trading posts in New Caledonia (present-day central British Columbia) he



Simon Fraser

traveled down what is now known as the Fraser River hoping to find the mouth of the river. After an arduous journey he caught a glimpse on July 2, 1808 of the Strait of Georgia, the body of water lying between Vancouver Island and the mainland. Harassed by several Indian tribes, he and his companions returned to Fort George without actually seeing the Pacific Ocean. Fraser is given credit for establishing the latitude at the mouth of the Fraser River as laying on the 49th parallel north – the eventual border between the United States and Canada running from Washington to Minnesota on the U.S. side and British Columbia to Manitoba on the Canadian side.

'Simon Fraser' was one of the unnamed roses still among a number of seedlings bred by Dr. Svejda when she retired in 1987. A colleague, Dr. Ian Ogilvie, thought it merited introduction and it was released by Canada's Agriculture-Agrafood Department in 1992. This Explorer Rose is a warm shrimp pink in cooler temperatures and a pleasant medium pink when slightly warmer. The first flush of bloom produces single petalled flowers in clusters of three to five. Subsequent cycles of bloom yield lightly double flowers similarly produced in tight nosegay looking sprays. The plant has grown to thirty inches in height and width in my Georgia garden. My impression is that 'Simon Fraser' is truly a perpetually flowering rose. Although some of the Explorer Roses are occasionally susceptible to black spot this variety is extremely disease resistant. 'Simon Fraser' secured its place in the garden during an occasion when I was out weeding. It is planted near 'Knockout,' 'Sharon's Delight,' 'Pink Knockout,' and 'Home Run.' As I was once again attempting to root out the healthy crop of yellow nutsedge growing in this bed a very pleasant sweet fragrance caught my attention. I looked this way and that before sticking my nose into one of the numerous blooms on my Explorer. What a surprise! Not 'Mr. Lincoln' fragrant but pleasing just the same. The complex breeding on this compact little Shrub rose is ('Bonanza' x {'Arthur Bell' x ['Red Dawn' x 'Suzanne']}) x 'Frontenac.' For those in colder climes it is hardy to -35°F (Climate Zone 3). For an illustrated and informative exploration of all the Explorer Roses visit www.canadianrosesociety.org.



'Simon Fraser'



From the Editor

One will notice as a general rule that I don't usually comment on a rose variety's disease resistance unless it demonstrates high resistance or tolerance. I get that 'Else Poulsen,' and 'Permanent Wave' are subject to powdery mildew. However, most roses perform well somewhere, e.g. Msr. Pernet –Ducher never witnessed any black spot on *R. foetida persiana* in his region of France.

I'm just about to embark on pruning my ever growing garden of roses. We usually wait until Valentine's Day in Middle Georgia, but I noticed a new bloom on my young plant of 'Morning Has Broken' this past weekend. As I look out the living room window I notice new growth on 'Alister Stella Gray' as well. Typical Middle Georgia weather - one day it's short sleeve weather and the next it's freezing (not literally).

I have about 1000 rose seeds in the refrigerator and can't wait to see new germinations which should begin shortly. A seedling from several years ago was entered in an International trials this year – nothing ventured, nothing gained.

I'm also very excited that newly ordered roses will begin arriving this month; most were ordered with hybridizing goals in mind. The 'Mail-Order Lament' began early this year. Really looking forward to Jim Sproul's deep yellow 'First Impression.'

A big celebration occurred last week, January 23rd – the ninth anniversary of my liver transplant! No words can express my gratitude to the family who offered the gift of organ donation in their time of grief.

Sources

'Ellen Poulsen'

Heirloom Roses, Rogue Valley Roses, Vintage Gardens

'Else Poulsen'

Angel Gardens, Antique Rose Emporium, Chamblee's Roses, Hortico Roses, Rogue Valley Roses, Rose Petals Nursery, Roses Unlimited, Vintage Gardens

'Kirsten Poulsen'

Antique Rose Emporium, Countryside Roses, Vintage Gardens

'Karen Poulsen' (also sold as 'Bailey's Red')

Angel Gardens, Countryside Roses, Rogue Valley Roses, Rose Petals Nursery

'Poulsen's Pearl'

Burlington Roses, Roses Unlimited, Vintage Gardens

'Poulsen's Yellow,' 'Poulsen's Delight,' 'Poulsen's Bedder,' 'Poulsen's Pink'
Vintage Gardens

'Simon Fraser'

Corn Hill Nursery, Heirloom Roses, High Country Roses, Hortico Roses, Sam Kedem Nursery & Garden

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'Nancy Renaissance'
Poulsen intro from 2000