

Roses Thwart Cows From Trampling Gardens

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PEACH BOTTOM (Lancaster)

— Unlike some hobbyists, Doris Hough had a specific reason for acquiring the first of what would grow into an impressive collection.

"I thought cows wouldn't destroy plants with heavy thorns," chuckles this good-humored dairy farm woman from the southwest corner of Lancaster County.

For years, Doris had been frustrated with that classic plague of dairy farms: escaped cows ma-



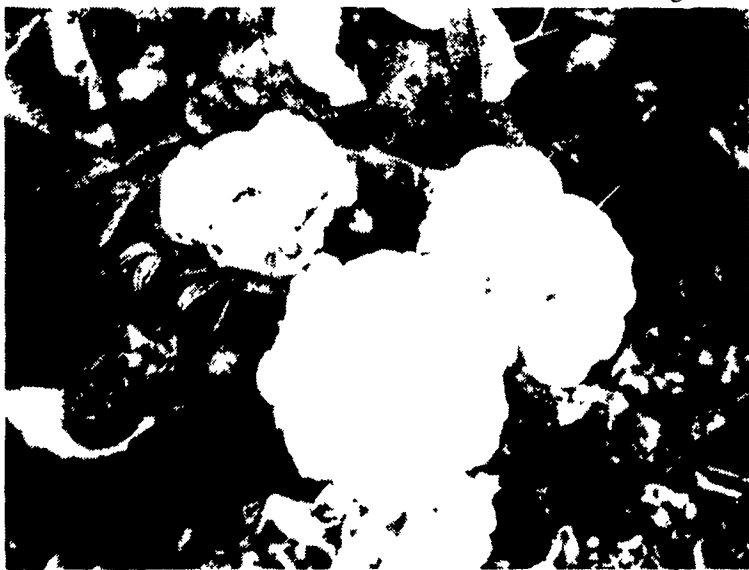
Crested Moss Roses have stems covered with soft, moss-like thorns. The "moss" extends to unopened buds, lending them a look called "Napoleon's hat."

rauding gardens. She and her husband, George, breed registered Jerseys at their Milk-N-Honey farm in the picturesque hills near Peach Bottom.

Natives of New Jersey, the Houghs became Lancaster Countians 16 years ago. They were "happily pushed out" of their former home due to development pressures. In fact, the Houghs had to deal with "progress" several times. Their first home is now in the center of Interstate 78. Sometime after moving, the Hough's learned their new location was a planned reservoir site and would lie under thirty feet of water. Later, a proposed jetport for the New York Port Authority was blue-printed for their farmland.

Though the Peach Bottom atomic plant lies just a few miles away, begun soon after their move to Pennsylvania, the Hough's have otherwise seen a halt to the disruptions of development which shadowed their early years of dairy farming.

The disruptions which did continue to irritate Doris Hough were the sort in which playful cows romped through her carefully



This Rosamundi Gallica variety has been documented to the year 1581, one of the Gallica species from which modern roses were developed. Swirling, striped color patterns, in shades of deep fuchsia to white, earned it a label as a "mad" rose. Since it blooms only once annually, in June, Doris Hough views it often to enjoy the daily color changes.

tended floral landscaping. In desperation one year, she acquired a few roses, of the "old" European type.

"It was just an accumulation of aggravation at cows over the years," she sighs, of those first thorn-laden bushes planted at the foundation of the lovely, classic bank barn.

A history buff and talented artist, Doris became increasingly intrigued with these roses of old European culture. And, the more she grew them and studied them, the more she wanted to add to her developing collection.

Today, Doris cultivates about 60 bushes of the old rose varieties. Many are ordered through a California firm, Roses From Yesterday and Today, and sent one-day-air to avoid plant dryout.

"Cultivate" is not a word Doris uses to describe her rose hobby. Old roses, she insists, just don't require much cultivation.

"I dig a hole," she says as she shrugs matter-of-factly while describing the preparation of the soil needed for these durable, historic shrubs of antiquity. Occasionally, she might toss in a bit of bone meal. "But I've never fertilized them yet; maybe I should."

An increasing number of visitors, including garden clubs, who view Doris' old roses in June, might find her casual approach to rose culture surprising. In early summer, the roses are covered with wonderfully fragrant blossoms in red, fuchsia and pink shades. Some varieties have blooms in patterns of blotched and striped colorings. Many are round and full with thick layers of petals; others bloom as singles, a delicate circle of petals.

But, visitors to Doris' roses don't just view a collection of blooming plants. A history lesson - with a touch of genetics - adds to the appreciation of the lovely plants.

Popular hybrid roses of today's backyards trace to an ancient European type, Rosa Gallica. Roses, centuries ago, were prized as medicinal, and their highly-fragrant blooms carefully harvested for perfume use. Dried petals, in concoctions similar to the popular potpourri, helped freshen the air in rooms of dark, musty castle.

The seed pods, or rose hips, which turn reddish-orange as they ripen, are very high in Vitamin C, and were valued for health uses.

But, with the exception of the Autumn Damask type, old roses generally bloomed only once a year. However, through early trade with China centuries ago, via



Surrounded by roses, Doris enjoys from the porch the seasonal color and scents of her rose and herb garden.

camel caravans, China or tea roses were introduced to Europe. Middle Age era rose growers crossed the two, breeding into the plants more continuous bloom. Modern hybrid tea roses have been developed from these lineages.

Doris Hough, however, has grown a few of the modern hybrid teas, and found them wanting for her needs. Cows, it seems, aren't daunted by the comparatively thornless nature of newer hybrids, as they are by the thousands of lethal-looking, needlelike, thorns packed along the sprawling stems of the classic old roses of medieval Europe.

About five of the roses that form the foundation of Doris' plantings bloom only in June. The others bloom most heavily then, but continue adding color and fragrance to the garden through the growing season.

One of the most unique categories of old roses growing at Milk-N-Honey are the Moss Roses. Actually a sport or mutation of a long-ago plant breeder cross, the stems of Moss Roses are heavy with a thick, green, blanket of short thorns which never harden. The soft, jagged-looking stem covering resembles a form of moss, and has a distinctive fragrance of its own. Buds of Moss Roses also look as though they are wrapped in a moss green covering.

Even with the extensive collection of old roses, which surround the Hough's farm home and barn, Doris insists she spends relatively little time tending them.

"I really like these old roses but I won't be a slave to them," is her philosophy, and one reason she keeps returning to the pages of old roses suppliers' catalogs.

Unlike hybrids teas, old roses of Europe are rarely bothered by such pests as the Japanese beetle or the black spot fungus. Spraying is almost never done by Doris, except on rare occasions when a particular plant might not be thriving and blooming to her satisfaction. No winter protection is ever given these roses; and Doris mulched them for the first time ever this year, with shredded bark.

She has even found a handy way to identify her several dozen roses. Unhappy with plastic stick-in markers - which cows can trample - or write-on tags which seemed to fade, Doris hit on the idea of labeling with bricks. Identifying information in black, indelible marker inks shows up well and is long-lasting on the red clay bricks, which don't blow away, rarely break and generally stay in place at

the base of each bush. Cows don't bother them, either.

Like those who grew old roses when they were the only known roses, Doris enjoys these plants beyond their summertime beauty, fragrance and landscaping value. She frequently gathers the fragrant petals, spreading them to dry in the living room of their home, for use in making potpourri.

Rose hips, especially large and



Artistic touches by Doris Hough start at the Milk-N-Honey farm lane. She painted the whimsical Jersey sign and planted nearby several old rose bushes.

abundant on the Rugosa types, become jelly. Doris gathers the hips as they ripen, cooks them in water, runs them through a food mill, and uses the strained juice for her Rose Hip jelly. Small quantities of the juice, frozen as available, are sometimes blended with honey, to make her husband's favorite sweetening for breakfast cereals.

"If you can only purchase one rose bush, buy a Rugosa," Doris advises. Each species, however, is unique, with its own desirable characteristics. Blooms of the Alba roses are intensely fragrant. Sweet Briar types - and briar is most descriptive of this anti-cow,

thickly-thorned rose - perfumes the surrounding air with an apple scent.

"By-products" of Doris' rose garden, such as the potpourri and jelly, often benefit the Robert Fulton birthplace historic site, which is located just a few miles from the Milk-N-Honey farm. With her love of history, Doris is an active supporter of this historic home, and assists with maintaining her local club's herb garden at the Fulton birthplace.

Her love of historic sites often surfaces in another area. Beginning as a child who loved to draw, Doris is now an accomplished painter in several mediums, including oils, watercolors and pastels. At age ten, she had the opportunity to take classes with an impressionist, who's technique of quickly getting on canvas what was seen, has strongly influenced her artistic style.

Many of her paintings of local scenic and historic site, decorate the rooms of the Hough farmhouse. Child portraits of their daughter and three sons were long-ago gifts to George. And, a painting of a former Jersey herd matriarch, to which much of their herd today traces, hangs in the farmhouse office next to a companion portrait of her well-known sire.

But Doris's artistic abilities go beyond painting. She's taught herself to tin punch, carves horses and birds, and occasionally works in stained glass. In fact, the Hough home is almost a gallery, or showcase, of her talents.

In early summer, though, it is Doris' roses which take center stage at Milk-N-Honey Farm. Their lovely colors and sweet perfume compensate for the cow-chasings which first triggered the order for that first thorny, "old" rose bush.

Planting of her 60 jagged-stemmed old roses hasn't completely eliminated cow herd visits to her gardens. But, with a twinkle in her artistic eye, Doris Hough admits that at least she has a fighting chance against their unwelcomed visits.

Homestead Notes