Santa Clarita Valley Rose Society

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Rose de Rescht

By Suzanne M. Horn, Master Rosarian Rosarian

The popular song "Everything old is new again" would best describe Rose de Rescht. This is a beautiful cerise colored Portland rose, which would classify it as an Old Garden Rose. However, in many ways it is a mystery in the world of old garden roses. It is obviously an older rose, but its original introducer and date of introduction are unknown, making it one of the wonderful mysteries of the Old Garden Rose history.

Writing a story about this particular rose required some extensive research. Like many Old Garden Roses, it presents an interesting historical background story. Esteemed rose experts and historians Bob Martin and Marily Young pointed me in the right direction with regard to the history of this fascinating rose.

A look into Modern Roses XII reflects the opinion that the rose was originally introduced "about 1880". This information is based on research done in France and England, primarily by members of the World Federation of Rose Societies (WFRS) Specialized Conservation Committee. Anny Jacob (Roses Anciennes et Roses Sauvages, Paris, Ulmer, 1993, p. 102), says, "it seems that this rose, originating in Iran, was reported in the year 1880 in England, then in the year 1890 in Germany, but it was then forgotten. It was not reintroduced to England until 1940-1950."

Author Brent Dickerson in the classic book, The Old Rose Advisor, speculates that this rose was most probably brought from France to Rescht circa 1807 during the French rapprochement and that it is possibly the red 'Toul-les-Mois'. It was rediscovered near the Iranian provincial capital of Rescht by Miss Nancy Lindsay, an English garden writer and plant collector, in 1945 after the Second World War and was brought back to the United Kingdom, where it was re-introduced around 1950.

Rose de Rescht has been considered by some to be a Damask Perpetual and was originally marketed in America as such. However, the ARS doesn't include that class. Therefore, it is now classified in Modern Roses XII as a Portland because it does rebloom. Whatever its ancestry, Rose de Rescht has made a considerable contribution to the garden as well as the show table. Since Modern Roses XII is the most recent ARS publication, rose exhibitors must now show this rose as a Portland with a date of introduction "about 1880," even though it has actually been around for a lot longer. It is shown in the Victorian Class, where it has been the dominant show rose in that class, winning 375 trophies in the past 13 years.

I would have to say that the most striking thing about this petite Old Garden Rose is the color. The American Rose Society classifies it as a deep pink (dp), and it literally leaps out at you in the garden despite its diminutive size. The bloom is not very large compared to most other roses, measuring up to two and a half inches inches across and consisting of up to 100 petals. These old-fashioned, fully double blooms produce pompon-like form that looks like a very full rosette, reflexing into a ball of intense fuchsia-crimson. Blooms are borne in clusters, but can be effectively disbudded for one bloom per stem, should that be your preference.

The deep pink rosette blossoms of Rose de Rescht are set closely against the medium green foliage, which frames each rose perfectly to give the impression of a leafy collar or what is known as a "high shouldered" look. The foliage is dense, vigorous and abundant. Its growth habit is upright, and compact, a tidy and well-shaped bush that will gradually grow to be about three or four feet high and wide. As such, it is a wonderful choice for smaller gardens. It is also an excellent choice to grow in a container of 15 gallon size or larger. Stem length is relatively short, averaging about 10 inches more or less, but lending excellent balance and proportion to the petite blooms.

Of particular note, this rose features excellent "remontance," the characteristic in plants that permits them to rebloom, generally two or more times in a season, either in distinct phases or after a rest period. This is a particularly desirable characteristic in an Old Garden Rose, many of which are "once bloomers" and only flower once a year. The Portland rose

has the distinction of being the first family of roses that had a repeat flowering habit. Rose de Rescht is a prolific spring bloomer with good reliable repeat blooms throughout the year. If the plant is deadheaded or periodically pruned back, rebloom is even better; and it is often said to always be in bloom.

Another significant advantage of Rose de Rescht is that it is relatively shade tolerant, and will bloom well in partial shade or filtered light. It also has fair to good disease resistance, although it can be susceptible to powdery mildew from time to time. In addition, when the weather turns hot, the spider mites really love this rose. These problems can of course be controlled by the judicious use of a water wand and a regular spray program.

Perhaps the most captivating quality about this little gem of a rose is its intense damask fragrance. Its enticing scent is exceptional in quality and pure old rose. Thanks to this sweet and rich perfume, complete with subtle undertones of Musk, these little pompons are often found in the "Most Fragrant" division at rose shows.

To summarize, it is easy to see why the beautiful Rose de Rescht is one that is often recommended to people who are contemplating buying their very first Old Garden Rose. It is quite literally the antique rose of choice for beginners. It is easy to grow, trouble free, well behaved, hardy and lovely to behold. Few other Old Garden Roses compare with this one for repeat growth habit, compact size, ease of care, eye-catching color and enchanting fragrance. It is an outstanding example of the Portland class and an absolute must for the gardens of all lovers of Heritage roses. I suggest you give it a try.

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Updated January 8, 2016