



the Rose Connection

Historic Garden Week
in Virginia
Showcases Roses

by *Mary Hintermann and Gail Babnew*

For eight days each spring Historic Garden Week opens hundreds of Virginia's private homes and gardens to the public. Visitors may explore 250 private gardens and enjoy 2000 flower arrangements created by Garden Club of Virginia members. On April 18, 2015, the Dolley Madison Garden Club (Orange) is hosting a tour of properties along the Old Spotswood Trail that share an important historical connection: roses.

Increasingly, Dolley Madison members are growing roses, so the club is a fitting tour host. Members have won trophies at the Garden Club of Virginia's annual rose show, sanctioned by the American Rose Society and using ARS accredited Judges. Bernice Walker has received Queen and King honors as well as Best in Show awards. Gail Babnew, whose home and gardens are on the 2015 tour, has won several Garden Club of Virginia trophies for her David Austin roses.

Rose Gardens at Springfields

When Gail Babnew and husband Joel Silverman purchased Springfields, a 100-acre Gordonsville, VA farm, they were unaware Gail's cousin once owned the property. In 2001, after renovation began on the historic 1791 property, one of Gail's relatives — a McElroy family descendent, returned to Springfields to visit her childhood home. That's when Gail learned a cousin developed and maintained terraced rose, vegetable and fruit gardens on the property between 1886 and 1907. Inspired by the farm's rich history and the family connection, Gail and Joel focused their attention on restoring the gardens. Tracing lines of old stone and brick borders, they recreated parterres and terraced and raised beds, incorporating 30 separate gardens and some 3000 plant specimens.

Gail revealed, "I had never designed or maintained a garden, but was interested in growing roses. Old garden roses were in keeping with our historical garden precedent, but they only bloom once per season, so I opted for a modern rose with old rose form and fragrance." She selected David Austin roses for her gardens.

Today, more than 300 David Austin rose shrubs greet visitors to Springfields, and 200 additional rose specimens accent remote gardens. Scents of vanilla, musk and myrrh permeate walkways, anchored by a richly fragrant 'Generous Gardener' that cascades over a white picket fence at the motor court entrance. Nearby, a 'Wildeva' forms a hedge at the north entrance of the residence, sharing space with 'Alnwick', which epitomizes the old rose style with a fragrance reminiscent of raspberry.



'James Galway'

photo courtesy Gail Babnew

A circle garden marks the formal approach to the residence where an English armillary is encircled by a tripartite array of roses, consisting of 'Queen of Sweden', 'Heritage' and 'Gentle Hermione'.

A garden combining 'Carding Mill' and a rare white rose, 'Claire Austin', has a southern exposure facing the ruins of an old stone tower. 'James Galway' envelop the pool garden trellis saturating the air with old rose fragrance. Flanking the pool, a semi-circular garden of 'Wild Eve' surrounds a French sundial. An adjacent bricked, high garden showcases 'Shepherdess' and 'Strawberry Hill', emanating the fragrance of myrrh and honey. A low bricked garden nearby features the almond-scented 'Mary Rose'.

Formal parterres representing the four seasons utilize dozens of cascading 'Wollerton Old Hall' shrubs budding in dark pink transitioning to buttery yellow and crème. The greenhouse terraced gardens feature 'Huntington Rose', 'Lady Emma Hamilton', 'Jude the Obscure', 'Lichfield Angel' and 'Graham Thomas', named as the World Rose Convention's "Favorite Rose."

Rose Gardens at Aerie Farm

In 1997, when Bill and Jane Remington purchased Aerie Farm (est. 1850), they couldn't wait to create gardens on the property. Bill chose rose gardens as the foundation of the Aerie landscape and was delighted to find remnants of roses still surviving on the farm.

Jane and Bill soon traveled to Shropshire, England to visit the David Austin gardens. Between 1998 and 1999, Bill planted 400 own-root David Austin roses plus several other varieties. The garden was designed with David Austin roses grown in trios (three same-variety roses per hole). Bill created three large rose areas: a formal circle garden at the rear entrance to the main residence and parterre gardens at the front of the home.

In recent years, rose rosette affected the majority of the roses, leaving Bill with no choice but to demolish existing beds and downsize the gardens. As he redesigns the Aerie gardens, Bill will plant his favorite David Austin cultivars, including 'Abraham Darby', 'Heritage', 'Sharifa Asma', 'Mary Rose' and 'Gertrude Jekyll'.

Roses at Annadale

When the current owners purchased the 244-acre Annadale estate, they saved land that had been in their

photo courtesy Gail Babnew



English armillary in the center garden.

family from 1928 to 1966 from development. Remnants of the formal gardens still exist, surrounded by boxwoods planted by a Master Gardener and Dolley Madison Garden Club member Edith Arnold in the early 1920s. Using roses from their previous residence, the family is currently restoring the landscaping to its historical splendor.

Roses at Barboursville Vineyard

Ironically, powdery mildew is responsible for a beloved landscaping tradition at American vineyards: the practice of planting roses at the end of grapevine rows.

When early settlers first imported vines to North America, they discovered European grapes were extraordinarily susceptible to powdery mildew — a native fungus that lives on oak trees — and also to grey mold (*Botrytis*). American vignerons realized they needed an early warning that disease onset was imminent. Since roses are susceptible to powdery mildew (*Sphaerotheca pannosa* var. *rosae*) and show signs of the disease weeks earlier than grapes, they became the 'canary in the coal mine' American vineyards needed. Today, winemaker Luca Paschina at Barboursville Vineyard depends on computer models to protect his vines; however, the roses remain. "At Barboursville Vineyard, we choose to have 180 'Champlain' and 'Red Simplicity' roses at the entrance to remind us to remember and treasure things from the past," said Paschina.

More Information on Historic Garden Week:
www.vagardenweek.org