

A Rose Repository at Ruston's Roses

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What better place for a rose repository could be found than at Ruston's Roses, Renmark? Over the next few years as many Teas, Noisettes and Chinas as possible will be collected, including foundlings.

This was the brainchild of David Ruston. When the old concrete irrigation channels, that were previously used to bring water for flood-irrigating the roses in the "good old days", became redundant and fell into disrepair, David saw these long unused areas as ideal for a new plantation. Anne Ruston brought in fertile red loam to fill the channel areas, and she was happy for David to plant historically important roses there. David hopes to add collections of other classes of roses as space becomes available, and perhaps even a collection of Australian-bred roses may be feasible. The unknown factor, however, is future water allocation.

Bringing these roses together in one bed, rather than having them interspersed with other roses as at present at Ruston's, will allow easier maintenance of the old rows. It will also give the roses space to grow to their full potential. The collection will serve many purposes: preservation, cultivation, study, display and education, and eventual distribution (it will be several years before the plants are well enough established to supply budwood). Some of the foundling Teas may eventually be re-classified, and some may duplicate others. Nevertheless, growing them together may answer some intriguing questions, such as "is **"BL Jane Isabella Linton ROR"** from Hay the same as the **"Nantawarra pink ROR"** from the mid-north of SA?"

In August 2007 a small group drove to Renmark to help David realize his dream. Pat Toolan and Margaret Furness had been busy collecting and growing suitable cutting material, and their cars were crammed full with roses of all shapes and sizes. Plants from John Nieuwesteeg were already there, and the Friends of Bishop's Lodge sent their "tea-set" later. John and I had driven up in our Rodeo, so that we could bring a large, round bale of lucerne hay to mulch the newly planted babies.

The sun smiled on us, and early Saturday morning we began work in the large area, 100m x 7m, that Anne had allocated for the first bed. We quickly discovered that the top dressing was at very different levels, some requiring a crowbar for digging and others being a piece of cake. There was much discussion between Pat, Margaret and David as to the best way to display the roses, and which of the three rows they should be placed in, during which time the coalface workers, John and I, dug steadily on. By lunch time seventy-one roses had been planted, and all that remained for the afternoon was to mulch with the lucerne hay and place the dripper lines.

A big thank you must go to Pat Toolan, Margaret Furness and John Nieuwesteeg, who supplied most of the roses for this plantation. There is an even larger forest of pots ready for planting in winter 2008. The majority will be on their own roots. Jane Zammit will be supplying some NSW foundlings; we South Australians are looking forward to seeing them. Thank you also to those people who supplied cutting material of old and foundling roses. We are still looking for a source of 'Busy Body', and any

foundlings we don't know about! This is one of the ways that we can ensure that they will remain for future generations to enjoy.

There will be some "overlap" groups (eg Dijon Teas, Tea-noisettes, Poly-Teas), and a small group of roses sold as Teas which aren't (eg "**Not Francis Dubreuil ROR**"). Margaret complains that it took more time to decide what to put on the labels, than to plant the roses!

Another interesting section of the repository this winter will be devoted to a small bed of common understock roses which have been used in Australia. I remember being most impressed with the rose '**De la Grifferaie**' in Toowoomba, where it was commonly used as an understock in years gone by. I have never seen it growing in the southern states, so it will be interesting to see it at Ruston's Roses.

Despite the roses only being allowed 16% of their normal water allocation this last spring and summer, they are thriving, and it's to the credit of Anne Ruston and her team that there has been only one loss among the roses planted last winter.

NB Sue Zwar acknowledges the expert help of Margaret Furness in writing this article. The rose photos in the Picture Gallery and those accompanying this article are all of roses to be planted in the new rose repository. Margaret Furness took the photos. ROR: Rediscovered Old Rose.