

World's "biggest" collection of rare roses unveiled at Ruston's Roses



Anne Ruston, (managing director, Ruston's Roses) David Ruston (founder Ruston's Roses) and Dr Gerald Meylan (President of the World Federation of Rose Societies, Switzerland) at the unveiling ceremony.

The first step in what is set to become the world's biggest collection of rare and endangered rose varieties was unveiled at Rustons Roses last week by Switzerland based Dr Gerald Meylan, President of the World Federation of Rose Societies.

The first planting of 250 Tea, noisettes and China rose varieties, which will become part of the Australian National Rose Collection at Ruston's Roses, Renmark, is already believed to be the biggest collection of its type in the world.

"The collection will be an inspiration for rose lovers from around the world and is a dream come true for the founder of Ruston's Roses Mr David Ruston," Dr Meylan said when launching the collection.

Regarded as the genesis of most of today's modern rose varieties, Tea roses were the first Chinese roses to be introduced into the western world and because of their ability to flower throughout the year became keenly sought after as genetic material to breed with European varieties of the time that tended to produce only one flowering a year.

Tea roses inherited their name from the fact that they were transported in the early tea Clippers and tended to have the perfume of tea.

While they were initially introduced to many countries around the world, the fact they prefer warmer climates and are adversely affected by cold frosty environments means today they have only survived in countries like Australia, Spain, the Mediterranean, South Africa, South America and the North Island of New Zealand.

Varieties which have survived in cold climates like the UK have only survived because they have been grown in glass houses.



Many delegates from the recent international rose conference in Adelaide attended the unveiling of the rare collection.

Mr David Ruston, who is chairman of the World Federation of Rose Societies heritage rose committee (made up of representatives from 24 countries), said that records show that some 2,000 Tea rose varieties were shipped into Australia in the early days of settlement.

“Our challenge is to track down as many of these we can and add them to the National Rose Collection,” Mr Ruston said.

“Many of the roses in the Tea collection have been found in Australian cemeteries and old gardens and because of the difficulties in determining their original names, have either been given the name of the cemetery they were found in or from the tombstones near where they were growing.

“It is largely thanks to people like Margaret Furness and Pat Toolan of the Barossa Heritage Rose Group, who have helped with the locating and planting of the rare roses varieties now in the collection, that future generations of rose lovers from around the world will be able to see and enjoy these vary rare plants.

“Up until now there was a high risk that many of these rare plants would be lost forever. Hopefully this initiative will encourage an even greater search and additions to the collection.

“The significance of the collection was brought home to me when I was at a recent international rose conference in Lyon, France, and was able to announce that the rose Constance, which was thought to be extinct, was alive and well and growing at Renmark in the National Collection, “ Mr Ruston said.

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