

Griffith Buck Roses

By Terri Lady

“A rose is a rose is a rose...except after an Iowa winter, and then it’s very likely dead.”

Dr. Griffith Buck, an Iowa State alumnus and horticulture professor from 1948 to 1985, spent his lifetime remedying that problem. During his tenure at Iowa State University, Buck developed more than 85 varieties of roses that were hardy enough to thrive in the Midwest’s tough summers and even tougher winters. Most Buck roses are hardy to zone 4 or colder. Hot summer sun does not discourage growth, and resistance to most common diseases contributes to healthy foliage. The shrubs are either spreading or upright, with large blooms that are similar in form to hybrid teas. Available in many sizes and colors, re-bloom is very good, with one cycle of blooming following another quickly on most varieties.

Only a small number of Buck’s roses were presented to ISURF to be patented. Two varieties, ‘Carefree Beauty’ and ‘Prairie Princess,’ had some commercial success. Fortunately, Buck gave other varieties to friends, neighbors and other rosarians, which ensured most survived. Many of Buck’s roses were named after his friends. In fact, ‘Dorcas’ was named after a television reporter on the Iowa State University’s television station (WOI-TV).

Buck, a respected member of the rose growers association and the rose growing community, was renowned for his dedication to the industry. After his retirement, however, little effort was made to market his roses or even to maintain the stock. Buck died in 1991, but his widow, Ruby, and daughter, Mary, are helping to preserve his legacy.

The Buck roses are the proprietary property of the Iowa State University Research Foundation. In honor of Griffith Buck’s accomplishment, a collection of his roses has been established at the Reiman Gardens in Ames, Iowa, under the supervision of former student, Nick Howell. An effort is under way to establish a complete set of Buck roses at the garden according to Julie Gustafson, program assistant in the Office of Intellectual Property and Technology Transfer. Located at the south edge of the main rose garden, Buck roses were planted in groups of three to six of each variety. On the other side of the modern roses is a bed of old garden roses inter-planted with more of Griffith Buck’s shrubs. In addition to the roses, an herb garden with a large variety of herbs was planted. Below the rose gardens on a lower level are thousands of annuals and perennials.

As people’s lives get busier, interest in Buck’s “lazy man’s roses” has grown enormously. A website (www.ag.iastate.edu/centers/cad/rose1/html) devoted to Buck roses have been developed providing information on distributors as well as detailed descriptions on varieties. A complete variety listing along with color photographs are also available for the following Buck roses:

Alamande-Ho

Amiga Mia

Andante

Apple Jack

April Moon	Aunt Honey	Autumn Dusk	Barn Dance
Blue Skies	Bright Melody	Brook Song	Buckaroo
Buckred	Cantabile	Carefree Beauty	Chorale
Country Dancer	Country Man	Country Music	Country Song
Distant Drums	Do-Si-Do	Dorcas	Earth Song
El Catala	Ellen's Joy	Enchanted Autumn	Folk Singer
Freckle Face	Freckles	Frontier Twirl	Gee Whiz
Gentle Persuasion	Golden Princess	Golden Unicorn	Grace Note
Habanera	Hawkeye Belle	Hermina	Hi, Neighbor
Honey Sweet	(That's) Incredible	Iobelle	Joseph F. Lamb
Kissin' Cousin	Les Sjulín	Malaguena	Mavoureen
Maytime	Mountain Music	Musicale	Music Maker
Night Song	Paloma Blanca	Para Glider	Pearlie May
Piccolo Pete	Pipe Dreams	Pippa's Song	Pizzicato
Polka Time	Polonaise	Prairie Breeze	Prairie Clogger
Prairie Flower	Prairie Harvest	Prairie Heritage	Prairie Lass
Prairie Princess	Prairie Squire	Prairie Star	Prairie Sunrise
Prairie Sunset	Prairie Valor	Princess Verona	Queen Bee
Red Sparkler	Rural Rhythm	September Song	Serendipity
Sevilliana	Silver Shadows	Spanish Rhapsody	Square Dancer
Summer Wind	Sunbonnet Sue	Virginia Reel	Wanderin' Wind
Wild Ginger	Winter Sunset		

Information contained in this article was obtained from "Living In Iowa",
www.Orionfarm.com, and the Iowa State University website.