

Rose de Rescht

'Rose de Rescht' was named after an Iranian city near the Caspian Sea, though its hybridizer, true name, and origins remain a mystery. According to the American Rose Society, it was "originally introduced into England about 1880, but was then forgotten about and re-introduced in the 1940s". The most widely accepted story is that the "noted British gardener", Miss Nancy Lindsay, brought it back to England from Iran (then Persia) and reintroduced it in the 1940s. Her trip to Persia in the spring of 1935 along with Alice Fullerton was detailed by Alice in a book called *To Persia for Flowers*, published by Oxford University Press in 1938. In *Roses* by Roger Phillips and Martyn Rix, Miss Lindsay is quoted as having written: "Happened on it [Rose de Rescht] in an old Persian garden in ancient Rescht, tribute of the tea caravans plodding Persia-wards from China over the Central Asian steppes; it is a sturdy, yard high bush of glazed lizard-green, perpetually emblazoned with full camellia flowers of pigeon's blood ruby, irised with royal purple, haloed with dragon sepals like the painted blooms on oriental faience."

However, others apparently did not believe the Lindsay discovery. In the *Encyclopedia of Roses* by Charles & Brigid Quest-Ritson, it is quoted that Miss Lindsay "was notoriously untruthful, and this claim can be discounted. It is certainly not a Persian rose – more probably of French origin." Additionally, Brent C. Dickerson, in *The Old Rose Advisor*, wrote that 'Rose de Rescht' is "possibly the red 'Tous-les-Mois'".

There is also controversy regarding its classification. The American Rose Society classifies it as a Portland, *Taylor's Guide to Roses* calls it a Damask, while Dickerson says it is a Damask Perpetual, and Rogers and Rix call it an Autumn Damask. According to Vintage Gardens, from their website, "The origins of this class [Portlands] are difficult to trace. The Original, Duchess of Portland, bears an affinity to Gallica and Damask roses; compact, Gallica-red, Damask-scented, with excellent renewal of bloom throughout the season. Portlands tend toward a compact habit and fit neatly into gardens of all sizes."

David Austin, in his book *Old Roses and English Roses*, said of 'Rose de Rescht', "There are signs of Gallica Rose influence in both flower and leaf, but the fact that it produces a second crop of flowers suggests its place in this [Portland] class." Classified as a deep pink with an outstanding garden rating of 8.7 by the American Rose Society, 'Rose de Rescht' has very double, rosette blooms that vary in color from crimson to fuchsia red to magenta pink. It has a compact shape, strong damask fragrance, is disease resistant, and repeats every 7-8 weeks in our climate. Since it is an Old Garden Rose that was originally introduced in 1880, it is eligible for the Victorian Award in rose shows and has been the top winning rose in that category for many years.

By Gail Trimble, Master Rosarian

Edited for the website by Nanette Londeree, March 2020