



The Northeast Rose Gardener

A Quarterly Newsletter

*By
Angelina & Mike Chute*

www.rosesolutions.net

The Northeast Rose Gardener is a quarterly e-newsletter written and edited by Mike and Angelina Chute and focuses on basic rose horticulture. Each issue will contain seasonal advice as well as tips and personal anecdotes from our over two decades of rose gardening in the Northeast.

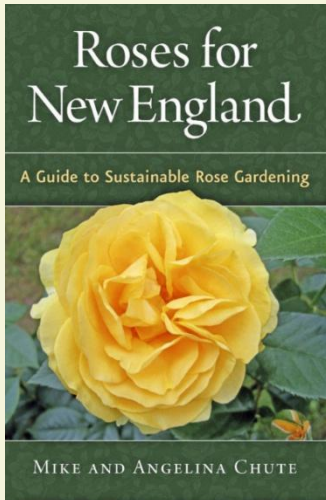
In this Issue of the Northeast Rose Gardener

you'll find:

- What Is a Sport? •
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Spring 2026

After a winter of record snowfall, which was great for our roses, we're looking forward to a road trip this summer to Quebec City, Montreal and points in-between to visit with our Canadian friends and relatives. We decided this year is a perfect time to abandon flying to Europe, and all that entails, and hop in the car instead. Our plan includes checking out the Quebec Rose Society's annual Rose Show as well as the rose garden in Montreal. The Canadian climate, the equivalent of USDA zones 4 and 5, is much colder than ours here in southern



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New England. Yet, Canadian rose gardeners grow much the same tender varieties that we grow, using unique winter protection practices that allow them to do so.

After a few years off, we are back to bud grafting this summer. We have potted up a number of root stock that will be ready for grafts after the first bloom cycle goes by in late June. We expect to add to our collection of vintage Brownell varieties as well as propagate additional out of patent rose varieties.

In this issue of the *Northeast Rose Gardener*, we will delve into the topic of rose “sports” – natural quirks of nature that may occur in rose gardens. In fact, Barbra Streisand discovered a sport growing in her garden. Who knows? You may find one in yours, too.

What is a Sport?



New Dawn

To see a list & descriptions of our Rose Programs, visit our website [RoseSolutions](http://RoseSolutions.com)

The Brownells: American Rose Pioneers

Our Newest PowerPoint Program is all about Brownell Roses.

It includes the history of Walter and Josephine Brownell's creation of what became known as SubZero Roses as well as the history of their

Rose catalogues often identify a specific variety of rose as a "sport." This may seem like an odd word to describe a plant if you're unaware of what that means. Usually, the term sport refers to athletics of some sort or sometimes colloquially to a generous fellow – a guy who buys a round of beers in a bar may be called a sport by his drinking buddies.

But what does it mean when describing a plant?

In a horticultural sense, a *sport*, while not a scientific term, refers to a naturally occurring genetic mutation, a part of a plant that is different from the rest of the plant. It comes from the Middle English word *desporten* which in turn comes from the Old French *desporter* both meaning "to divert or alter." These terms have been condensed to the simple *sport*.

Types of Sports:



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description of this
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Climbing Iceberg

Growth

Habit

The most common sports of roses are changes in growth habit, from bush type to climbers, and changes in color. The white floribunda Iceberg and the famous hybrid tea Peace are two of many bush type varieties that sported climbing forms appropriately named Climbing Iceberg and Climbing Peace that were introduced as new varieties.



Break o'Day

Another sport that changed growth habit from a hybrid tea to a climbing rose is the Brownell rose Climbing Break o' Day. The original hybrid tea was introduced in 1939 and the climbing sport in 1946. Both maintain the same flower form with 50+ packed filled blooms, same foliage and the same stunning apricot color.

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Rose Suckers

Suckers, not to be confused with sports, are stems growing from the rootstock *below the bud union* on grafted plants. The term “sucker” dates back to the late 1500’s and derives from the thinking that these stems, or shoots, suck the water and nutrients away from the main plant. Suckers can be identified because their foliage and blooms are



Brilliant Pink Iceberg

Color

Sports:

Color sports are more common than you would think. Some are very subtle and go unnoticed, often attributed to environmental factors or change of season. Others are hard to miss. A glittering pink sport of the pure white Iceberg was discovered in Tasmania and introduced as Brilliant Pink Iceberg in 2001.

distinctly different from the rest of the rose bush. If left alone, they will eventually take over the entire rose bush, killing off the grafted part of the plant. They should be pruned off as close as possible to the trunk of the rootstock to prevent them from growing back.



Burgundy Iceberg

**Discouraging
Fungal Diseases &
Encouraging
Beneficial Insects**

A tip from our Rose

Journal:

Some companion plants will discourage fungal diseases and can be planted between roses to attract beneficial insects and repel destructive

Brilliant Pink Iceberg, in turn, created its own deep purple and cream sport which was introduced as Burgundy Iceberg. All have the same bushy habit, great sprays, glossy green foliage and nearly thornless stems.

ones. Plants from the allium family - onion and garlic - may help repel aphids. Some gardeners plant garlic as a way to control black spot and powdery mildew.

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Rose Gardening

Season by Season:

A Journal for Passionate Gardeners

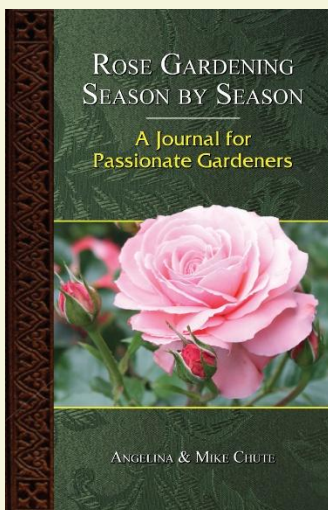


Photo by Mike Chute

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New Dawn

Remondant

Sports:

Alterations in remondancy – repeat bloom – and petal count occur too, but are far less common. Arguably, the most famous rose sport was the discovery by Henry Dreer in 1930 of a repeating stem growing on a bush of a once-blooming climber named Dr. W. Van Fleet. The repeat-blooming stem was removed from the bush, then rooted and, after a trial period to test its stability, was introduced as New Dawn. It maintained the same soft pink, lightly fragrant blooms, rowdy growth habit and cast-iron constitution as Dr. W. Van Fleet but became more desirable because of its repeat bloom. New Dawn, with 30 to 40 petals, sported still another variation with twice as many petals and was introduced as Awakening.

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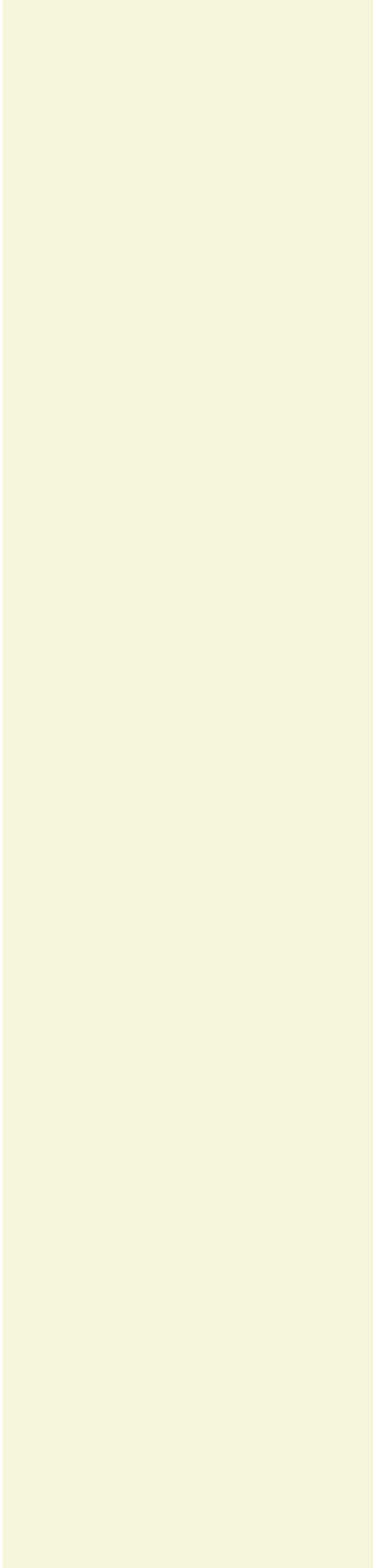
Awakening

Generally, a sport is not as good a plant as its parent. They are notoriously unstable, frequently reverting back to its original form. For that reason, commercial growers are suspicious of sports and extensively field test the very few sports they even consider for introduction. While the vast majority of sports remain anonymous curiosities, a very few do get introduced occasionally.



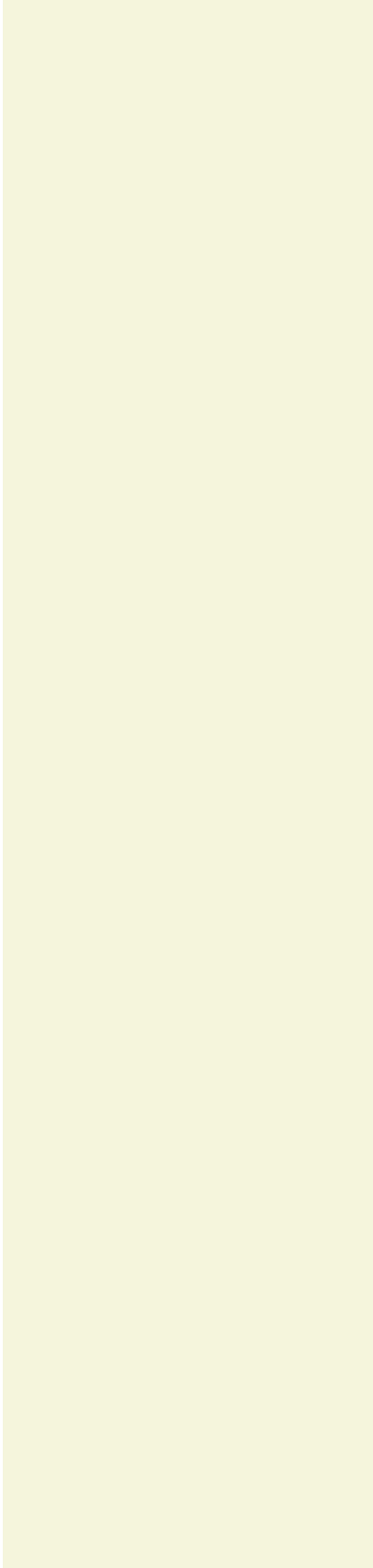
Knockout Rose

In addition to the sports already mentioned, other examples of sports in commerce include both Pink Knockout and Blushing Knockout, color sports of their well-known cousin Knockout.

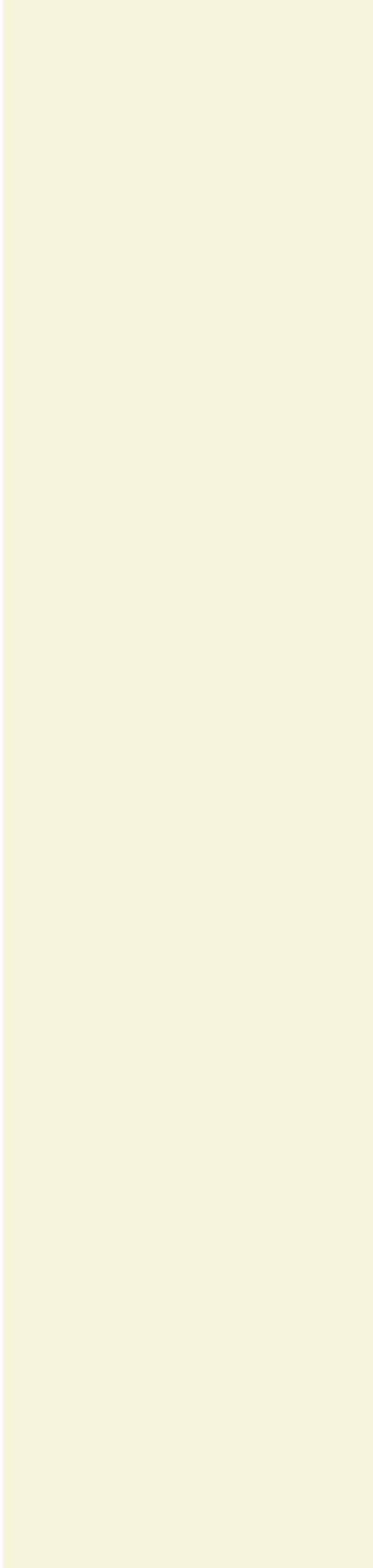


Blushing Knockout

David Austin's dark pink Mary Rose sported the white
Winchester Cathedral and the soft pink Redoute.



Mary Rose



Winchester Cathedral



Redoute

Sports can and do occur anytime and anywhere even in home gardens. Barbra's Baby, a 2026 introduction, is a

pink sport of the deep red hybrid tea Lasting Love
discovered by Barbra Streisand in her home garden in
Malibu.



Barbra's Baby



Lasting Love

So, keep an eye peeled in your garden for a rose with a stem or flower that looks or behaves differently in some way. It could be a sport that is quietly waiting for discovery. Maybe it will even buy you a beer.

Next Issue: Look for our Summer 2026 issue of *The Northeast Rose Gardener* in August of 2026. We hope you enjoy the June Bloom this year!

Mike and Angelina Chute