

# ROSES IN JAPAN

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International Heritage Rose Conference, Japan 2012  
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It was the opportunity of a lifetime for us to attend the International Heritage Rose Conference held by the Rose Culture Institute, Japan, under the aegis of the World Federation of Rose Societies, in Sakura, from 28<sup>th</sup> May to 6<sup>th</sup> June 2012. We thoroughly enjoyed this trip, in the company of beautiful roses, gardens, and our rose friends, old and new – all set off by the careful planning and remarkable attention to every detail of the convention by the organizers.

The conference itself was held at the Kusabue-no-aka Rose Garden, Sakura, a few kilometers north of Tokyo. This garden, which boasts of extensive plantings of the roses of the late Seizo Suzuki, Japan's premier rose breeder, has an amazing collection of other roses, including species, climbers, ramblers, heritage roses, including rare introductions from the ancient roses of China. The artistically constructed arches, pergolas, summer-houses and other structures, all made by volunteers, and all covered with climbing roses, added greatly to the impact of the garden. Having been associated with this garden from the beginning, we were delighted to see a separate planting of some of our hybrids, called The Dream of India garden.

An international gallery of rose experts presented talks on many aspects – species, breeding, history, old books, fragrance .... From countries as diverse as Hungary, Belgium, Italy, Scotland as well as Australia, U.S.A., China and India. The exhibition of flower arrangements were delicate, aesthetic and a wondrous feast for the eyes.

The pre- and post conference garden tours were organized to show delegates two of the most interesting rose species of Japan, in the wild – *Rosa multiflora adenochaeta*, with its profusion of white edged pink flowers, and the rare *Rosa hirtula*, perhaps the only rose which grows to tree form, with pale lilac pink blooms.

During the course of these tours we had a chance to see some beautiful rose gardens. The colorful Keisei Nursery and Display Garden, near Tokyo, the beautifully landscaped sloping gardens at Akoa on the coast, as well as the

Kawagochiko Musical Forest Museum rose garden, with roses displayed to perfection amidst artistic water features.

The tour to locate *R. hirtula* in the wild passes through the mountains of Hakone, from where we had a splendid clear view of the spectacular Mt. Fujiyama. We also saw plants of *R. nipponense* and *R. wichurana*.

We were privileged to see the great Buddha statue at Kamakura, and that marvel of Japanese engineering, the undersea passage through Tokyo Bay.

After the convention many of the delegates visited the Jindai Botanical Garden, Tokyo, (which has just celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary) featuring lovely displays of roses, ranging from species to climbers and with vast displays of modern roses. These gardens are also the location for the International Rose Trials of the Japan Rose Society.

The conference succeeded admirably in sensitizing rose lovers to the beauty of heritage roses and the tours were a revelation on the care and respect with which various aspects of Japanese heritage were revered and safeguarded.