

## Myrtle Cottage – Angela Morgan

It's midsummer when I visit Glennis at *Myrtle Cottage*, her home in Eastwood, bought in 1995. The garden is full of flowers, roses, ground covers, cottage garden plants, camellias.

'There's not much out', says Glennis, who has seen the bounty of spring. To my eyes there is colour everywhere.

The front garden slopes gently to the east, with the two tall crepe myrtles in the front, and a huge lilly pilly to the north, on the neighbouring property. When looking at the house before purchase, a friend who was with Glennis said: "The house looks like you and you will have to call it 'Myrtle Cottage after the Crepe Myrtles' – and so it was named.

These trees cast quite a lot of shade, but Glennis' roses and cottage plants are thriving.

Along the front fence **Jean Ducher (G. Nabonnard – HelpMeFind)** an apricot blend Tea rose, catches the morning sun, and flowers all winter with its delicate pale blossoms, when the crepe myrtles stand bare. Next to the driveway **Cornelia** (Hybrid Musk) sends out long arched branches, still flowering in clusters of pink, kept high and safe by the rose arch made especially for this rose by Steve Abrahams.

Grouped near **Cornelia** are **Marie van Houtte** (Tea), and **Duke of York** (China), described in *HelpMeFind* as deep pink to white with a strong fragrance. There too is the ever-challenging early Hybrid Tea **Dainty Bess**, and our very own found rose, the Tea "Agnes Smith", found on an 1893 grave and propagated by Barbara May. Next to "Agnes" is **Mrs R. M. Finch** – more later about this one! Glennis has found that Teas, Chinas and Polyanthas do well here.



Left: **Cornelia** on the arch made by Steve Abrahams

Above: **Marie Van Houtte**

Right: **Dainty Bess**

After a childhood growing up with a gardening family, Glennis became interested in heritage roses through the influence of Marian Crambrook and Helen Carroll, and joined HRIA in 2005. *Myrtle Cottage* is the first garden where Glennis has planted roses, starting with David Austin roses, then going on to replace these with Heritage roses. The first Heritage roses she bought were **Comtesse de Labarthe**, (Tea) – (Often sold as Duchesse de Brabant) – **Madame Antoine Mari**, (Tea) and **Mutabilis** (China). All are still here in the garden. The **Comtesse** and **Madame Antoine** are in the bed in front of the house, **Mutabilis** in the back garden, facing west. **Mutabilis**, recurrently blooming with single flowers that start as apricot buds, open pink and fade to crimson, grows into a large bush. Glennis sighs – "Never plant **Mutabilis** under the eaves!"

The **Comtesse** remains her favourite, but must add **Marie van Houtte** and – 'Can I have a third?' – **Général Galliéni** (Tea). The General's dark red blooms, with their centres shading to cream or golden yellow, are a pleasing contrast to the many pinks in the garden.

Why these three? Because they grow well into a bush form, and they flower all the time.



Left:  
**Madame Antoine Mari** in the front garden

Right:  
**Général Galliéni** flowering exuberantly despite being in a south facing position





Glennis showed me photos of the garden when she first moved in - the front was a grass lawn, except for the crepe myrtles and some azaleas close to the house. Now all four sides are deeply planted, with an oval bed in the middle. In this bed Glennis combines low growing and ground cover roses – (Little) **White Pet**, **Green Ice**, **Cécile Brunner** – with cottage plants, and each Spring, tulips, which Glennis treats as annuals. Constant maintenance keeps enthusiastic self-seeders from taking over.



**Two of the spring highlights in Glennis' garden**

Left:  
Tulip **Negrita** in the front bed

Right:  
**Madame Grégoire Staechelin** safe from possums on a free-standing wooden arch



The back garden faces north-west. Roses have to contend with shade from a large jacaranda tree and possums along the fence. Life is never simple! **The Fairy** (Polyantha) flowers opposite the back door, **Rosette Delizy** (Tea) against the fence.

Here **Madame Grégoire Staechelin** (Large-flowered Climber) grows exuberantly over a wooden arch. **Madame Grégoire** is a once blooming rose, but Glennis says she flowers for six wonderful weeks, an unforgettable beauty.

**Mutabilis** has to be cut back severely (don't mention the eaves...) but continues to thrive. **Carabella** (yellow-blend Floribunda) romps along the fence, despite possum attack, and to the south-west **Général Galliéni** finds a patch of sunshine. Here too are **Bon Silène** (Tea) and **Lamarque** (Noisette).

Throughout this back garden Glennis has planted cottage and rockery plants which pick up the tones of the roses and add depth and contrast. *Alternanthera* 'Little Ruby' grows in edge of the rockery in front of **Général Galliéni**.

A pot holds a modern rose – shock, horror! – this one a lovely Richard and Ruth Walsh Australian bred Miniflora **Tiny Pearls**, at the time of my visit full of fine pointed buds, ready for a second flush. This and **Sally Holmes** (Shrub) flowering happily out the front, are the only modern roses in the garden.

I asked Glennis if she has any heritage rose collections. No, but there have been other collections – salvias, which Glennis found eventually grew too big, so that now she keeps the tall ones back towards the fence and uses smaller specimens such as *Salvia microphylla* 'Musk Pink' and *Salvia x jamensis* 'Los Lirios' at the front.

Glennis has an informal collection of true geraniums, which I love. I've spied a few different ones showing their dainty colourful faces at the feet of the roses. A bright pink *Geranium sanguineum* 'Shepherd's Warning' combines well with the larger leaves and pink flowers of the Dr Keith Hammett Dahlia hybrid 'Neon Star', newly acquired at the most recent Plant Collectors' Fair Club meeting.



Left: Pink on pink – *Geranium sanguineum* 'Shepherd's Warning' and Dahlia hybrid 'Neon Star'

Right:  
*Alternanthera* 'Little Ruby' combining with *Salvia microphylla* 'Musk Pink'



Photos: Angela Morgan



I asked Glennis what else she would like to share about her garden of Heritage roses?

“Saying goodbye!”

Because, after 27 years, Glennis is moving, and selling *Myrtle Cottage*.

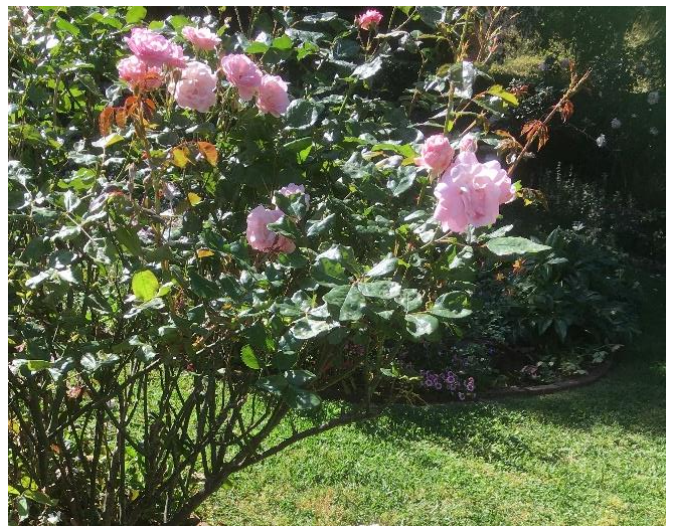
What are her plans for her next garden and which are her ‘must have’ roses?

Garden plans can’t be made until the next step is taken, so that’s a question that only time can answer. As for the ‘must have’ roses – Glennis’ choices are **Cornelia** (including her Steve Abrahams’ structure), **Madame Anton Mari**, **Marie Van Houtte** and of course the ‘Comtesse de Labarthe’.

Each of these four grow into fairly big roses, so Glennis will be looking for a good bit of space for her garden in her next home. We would not be rosarians if we did not hope and dream ...

In a subsequent chat Glennis added a fifth must-have rose: this one is **Mrs R. M. Finch**, the only (registered) rose bred by Australian R. M. Finch (of Concord NSW, in 1923), and named after his wife. Unlike the other four chosen roses, this is a small rose, suitable for a restricted space. Glennis says it flowers for nine months of the year! Reviews say it’s a good do-er, one enthusiastic owner saying it was her first ever rose, ‘grew like a weed and bloomed like crazy’ and is a perfect rose for a beginner. (From *Dave’s Garden* website – <https://davesgarden.com/>) Opinions on fragrance can be varied, according to *HelpMeFind* find, but reports that I saw mentioned that there is a strong fragrance.

And it grows from cuttings – Look out Glennis, we’ll all descend on *Myrtle Cottage* with our secateurs!



Left: ‘Comtesse de Labarthe’ (often sold as *Duchesse de Brabant*) – Glennis’ top pick

Right: **Mrs R. M. Finch** – not so well known, suitable for small gardens, a recurrent bloomer

It’s hard to leave a garden, created with such care and pleasure. Fortunately our heritage roses grow well and newly planted ones will thrive in different places. There’s a spot just waiting for a gardener like Glennis to use her skill, knowledge and patience to start again.

Thank you Glennis for guiding us all through these last two difficult COVID-19 years, especially for your timely and careful management of meetings and get-togethers, so that although we have endured many cancellations we have also met when we could, and managed to continue our work at Rumsey Rose Garden in Parramatta Park, and at Rookwood.

Thank you for generously sharing your garden at *Myrtle Cottage* and your Heritage Rose story with us.

*Unless otherwise acknowledged, photographs are by Glennis Clark.*

#### **Addendum:**

*This article was written for the Sydney Group Newsletter January 2022. Since then Glennis has down sized and now gardens with roses in pots in two courtyards.*