



Rosa hugonis

Singularly Beautiful Roses

A Publication Dedicated to Single,
Nearly Single, and Semi-Double Flowered Roses
Volume 9, Issue 1
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A Rose for Father Hugh

For many who have grown roses for years there are memories of a new variety that came into commerce that overwhelmingly captured our attention and that of enthusiasts everywhere. During my almost forty years of rose-growing the first example that comes to mind is ‘Double Delight’ – a variety that remains a best seller. As time passes we enthusiastic rose growers replace these once must haves with the next must have. And then we do it again . . . In the early decades of the twentieth century such a rose appeared in America and became an incredible commercial success – a must have!

HUGONIS SELLS BIG

In ten years not a single Hugonis has been “brush-piled,” and we grow thousands of them. Rather we are kept busy trying to make supply meet demand. A prominent officer of the A. A. N. enroute from Rochester saw our Hugonis. When he looked out across the long rows of big, beautiful specimens chock full of life and vigor, **he bought 300 on sight.**

“Hugonis is America’s best hardy yellow Rose,” says Dr. E. H. Wilson, of Arnold Arboretum.” An upright-growing shrub with slender, spreading branches on which fragrant flowers come in yard-long sprays of soft yellow. Always beautiful. After flowering, the bush itself is decorative and attractive.

Urge your trade to use Hugonis for lawn specimens; with shrubbery; along porch steps; as boundary or hedge; for cemetery work. Fall planting is practical because Hugonis is completely hardy; gets firmly established over winter; saves time.

Place your order now for either Fall or Spring shipment. Write or wire to-day. You’ll receive top-notch quality, and you’ll be sure of your supply when you want it!

Nice dormant own-root stock, ready November 1st.

	100	10	Each
2 year.....	\$60.00	\$7.00	\$0.75
Ex. 2 year.....	75.00	8.50	.90

THE CONARD-PYLE CO. WEST GROVE, PA

Our narrative begins in the year 1851 with the birth of Irishman John Aloysius Scallan (1851-1928) in Rathmines, then one of Dublin’s southern suburbs. As a young man he was educated in Ireland, France, and Belgium. He joined the Franciscan Order in 1874 and was given the name Father “Hugh” Scallan. In 1882 he was ordained a priest and began teaching at Gorton Monastery, Manchester. Four years later he left England to become a missionary in China, first serving in the **Shaanxi** (Shensi) Province in north-central China.

Records of Father Hugh’s activities as a missionary are scant, however, one anecdote mentions that he was attacked and beaten in



1893 by men who opposed the efforts of the Franciscans and others to spread Christianity among the peoples of China. The political unrest prevalent in the late decades of the 19th century made life in China difficult for many, not just missionaries.

While in China (circa 1889), Father Hugh Scallan met, served with, and befriended fellow missionary Father Giuseppe Giraldi (1848-1901). They, like many missionaries, received numerous earnest requests to collect seeds and horticultural specimens from the rich diversity of flora unique to China. Dr. Augustine Henry, a medical doctor and customs officer serving in China, published a book in 1893 in which he specifically solicited the assistance of missionaries living in the interior of the country; “If any one wishes to help he will confer a great favor on the writer by sending him specimens of dried plants, drugs, woods, dyes, etc. These specimens will be forwarded when necessary to England, to have them dealt with by the authorities at Kew.”¹

Father Giraldi may have been the more diversely enthusiastic plantsman of the two. *Rosa giraldii*, lilac *Syringa oblata* var. “Giraldii,” and maple *Acer giraldii* are three distinct species collected from seed by the Italian priest and sent to Europe. However, in a letter written in February of 1896, Giraldi indicated that Father Hugh had asked him the previous October to send a small box of plants and seeds to the Museum of Natural History in London.² Botanical journals also reveal that further horticultural samples were sent by Father Hugh in August of 1897 and September of 1899, including new species of *Allium* (flowering onion), *Juncus* (sedge family), *Carduus* (thistle family), and *Senecio* (aster family).³ The two latter species came, according to one British source, “from a very large and important collection made [by Scallan] in central China,”⁴ presumably also containing seeds from a hitherto unknown-to-the-western-world yellow-flowered rose. The same journals indicate that Father Hugh’s botanical collecting took place in the mountains of both the Shaanxi and Sichuan provinces.

The earliest mention of the one rose raised from the seeds sent by Father Hugh appears in the March 1, 1905 edition of *Curtis’s Botanical Magazine* (Volume 1, 605). Editor Sir William T. Thiselton-Dyer stated that upon reception of the package at the Museum of Natural History the seeds had been sent to Kew Gardens. W. B. Hemsley, Keeper of the Herbarium at Kew, first formally described the seedling and subsequently named it *Rosa hugonis*, the Latinized version of Father Hugh’s name. About it he wrote, “Exception may, perhaps, be taken to its being treated as a distinct species; but as it certainly deserves a distinctive name, it seems better to give it one, without tacking it on to any other [a comment addressing other botanists’ tendency to agree that it was a form of *Rosa xanthina*, Lindley].”⁵ Several features gave promise of a successful commercial future, including, long, willowy sprays of two-inch canary yellow flowers, reddish maroon new growth, slender fern-like foliage, and a cold-hardy nature.

Rosa hugonis – first color illustration
Curtis Botanical Magazine, March 1, 1905



Rosa giraldii



Cuttings or plants were distributed relatively quickly. “Bulletin No. 132” from the U.S. Department of Agriculture indicates that cuttings were received in America on March 11, 1907 from Vilmorin-Andrieux & Co., Paris.⁶ Plants were raised and grown in the department’s rose garden in Arlington, VA. David Faircloth, manager of the Department of the Agriculture’s Office of Seed and Plant Importation, gave credit to Dr. Walter Van Fleet for insisting that “*Rosa hugonis* be introduced into America for the dooryards of American homes and for the use of American rose hybridizers.”⁷ It appeared in the catalog of English nurserymen James Veitch and Sons in 1908.⁸ Plant collector E. H. Wilson found the rose growing in the wild in western Sichuan Province, China in May of the same year.⁹ Professor Charles S. Sargent noted that plant hunter William Purdom collected seeds of *Rosa hugonis* and sent them to the Arnold Arboretum in Boston, Massachusetts in 1909.¹⁰ [Editor’s note. Arnold’s acquisition number lists the rose raised from the seeds collected by Purdom as *Rosa xanthina*, Lindley – see above.]



Above – *Rosa hugonis*, *The Genus Rosa*
Painting by Alfred Parsons

Right – *Rosa hugonis*
Photo by Maribel Blasco

Wealthy horticulturist Ellen Willmott drew attention to *Rosa hugonis* by including it in her encyclopedic monograph on species roses – *The Genus Rosa* (published in multiple sections from 1910-1914). The roses’ exquisite portrait (Part XIV, p. 278), painted by Alfred Parsons, was incentive enough to add the rose to one’s garden.



Another source recommended the rose - particularly to British rose enthusiasts. *Bean's Trees and Shrubs Hardy in the British Isles*, first published in 1914, became one of the pre-eminent references for familiarizing gardeners with the broad spectrum of newly available horticultural treasures from other continents. Beyond the botanical characteristics given in the description, William Jackson Bean wrote, "It is a most charming rose and the most vigorous of the yellow flowered species, beautiful even when not in flower, for its luxuriant, feathery masses of foliage."¹¹

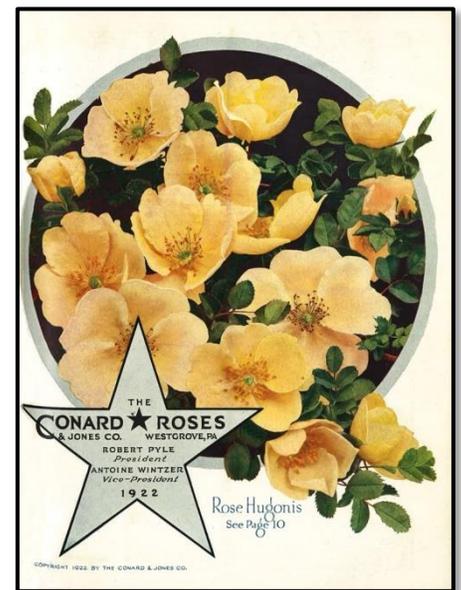
Robert Pyle, President of the Conard & Jones Company (eventually Conard-Pyle Co.), became the leading commercial promoter of *Rosa hugonis* after securing stock of the rose in 1911. By 1916 the rose was placed on the company's "Best Roses for America" list. One year later a black and white photo appeared in their 1917 *Floral Guide* accompanied by a description that advertised one year potted plants. The next year a brilliantly colorized image of *Rosa hugonis* was featured on the cover of the publication. A quote from Mrs. W. Van Fleet pointed out the early blooming habit of the "new" rose, "We had Hugonis in bloom during the last snowstorm [in the Washington, D.C. area] and I never saw a more beautiful sight."¹² In 1919 the company began a marketing campaign promoting the rose as "The Pioneer of a New Race of Hardy Roses." Their *Floral Guide* boasted, "Its hardiness is remarkable, for we have never yet known even a tip of a single branch to winterkill, and the same excellent report comes from trials made in Massachusetts and Wisconsin."¹³ By 1924 the company adopted a tag-line that accompanied every mention of Hugonis - "The Golden Rose of China." Robert Pyle's enthusiastic promotion of the rose led to the sale of thousands of plants.



1918 Conard & Jones

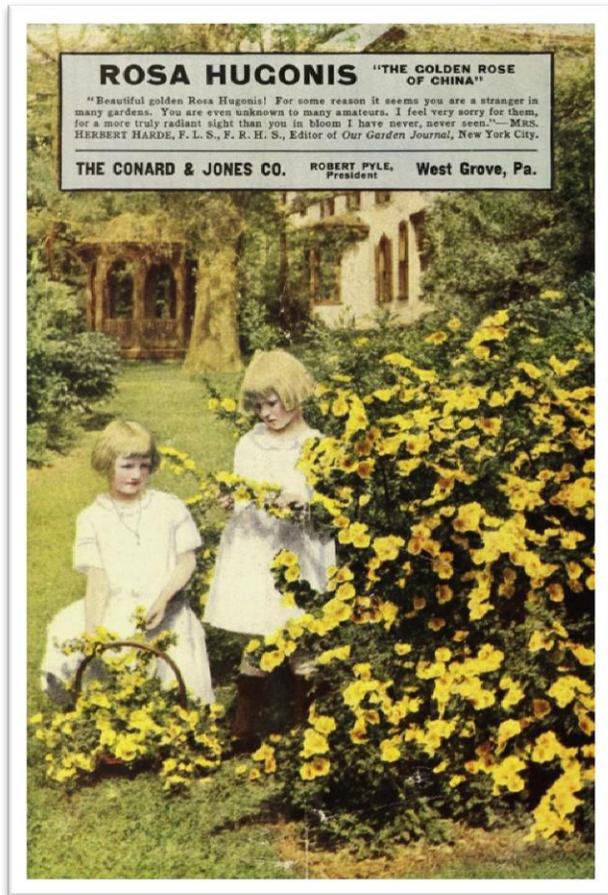


1920 Conard & Jones



1922 Conard & Jones

During the years Conard & Jones was building its inventory of Hugonis and indeed expanding as a premier retail source for roses of all sorts the Arnold Arboretum also played a significant role in advancing the rose's value as a desirable garden specimen. A 1915 arboretum publication described a now mature *Rosa hugonis* in glowing fashion . . . "[It] has pale yellow single flowers about two and a half inches in diameter and is a tall, perfectly hardy free-flowering shrub with slender erect and spreading pale brown stems and small pale leaves. There are not many yellow flowering Roses that are perfectly hardy and free-flowering in this climate and *R. hugonis* is certainly one of the most valuable single Roses which has lately been introduced into gardens."¹⁴



Dr. Van Fleet, in the interim, had looked beyond *Rosa hugonis*' garden and commercial prospects to its genetic potential. In the 1916 *American Rose Annual* he wrote somewhat optimistically, "*R. hugonis* appears to afford the better opportunities for breeding [compared with *R. xanthina*], as it seeds with great freedom and appears to hybridize readily with other wild and cultivated roses."¹⁵ Crosses with *R. rugosa* 'Alba' and *R. spinosissima* var. *altaica* yielded pale yellow to white seedlings but were not introduced commercially. In the 1917 annual Dr. Van Fleet noted low germination rates for Hugonis seedlings. Two years later he guardedly reported that "some of the *R. hugonis* hybrids are worth working with." In particular the first Hugonis seedling having Hybrid Tea "blood" was showing promise. He wrote that it had bloomed for three seasons and was at least "... interesting, if not beautiful. The pollen parent was most likely Radiance, and the large, double, pinkish yellow flowers afford strong resemblance to that excellent variety in form and



'Dr. E. M. Mills'
Photo by Robert Rippetoe

fragrance. The plant is healthy, hardy, and has grown over four feet in height. It fruits sparingly and shows signs of a fair increase by suckers.”¹⁶ Those comments seem to point to ‘Dr. E. M. Mills,’ a rose eventually introduced in 1926, four years after the doctor’s untimely death. American Rose Annual Editor Horace McFarland published a note re: an unnamed plant he described as a “Hugonis-Radiance Hybrid” planted in his Harrisburg, PA garden in March of 1921.¹⁷ A photo of it featured in the 1923 ARA seems to clearly depict the rose known in commerce today as ‘Dr. E. M. Mills.’ [Editor’s note; questions regarding the parentage of this cultivar have been raised, noting ostensible similarities to *Rosa rugosa*. Until laboratory evidence proves otherwise . . .]. In the 1921 *American Rose Annual* Dr. Van Fleet indicated that about 250 hybrid and self-seedlings of *Rosa hugonis* had bloomed to date. They included crosses with those already mentioned above and ‘Harison’s Yellow,’ *R. omeiensis*, both forms of *R. xanthina*, and after numerous failed attempts – *R. foetida*.¹⁸

A number of species hybrids involving *Rosa hugonis* were introduced during the mid-20th century which are, as expected, once-flowering. Interest in its potential as a parent seems to have waned; however, several hybridizers continue to work with successive generations of Hugonis-influenced offspring (see photos and captions). Perhaps a new generation of rose enthusiasts will rediscover the value of “Father Hugo’s Rose” for its durability, good health, and year-round landscape interest.

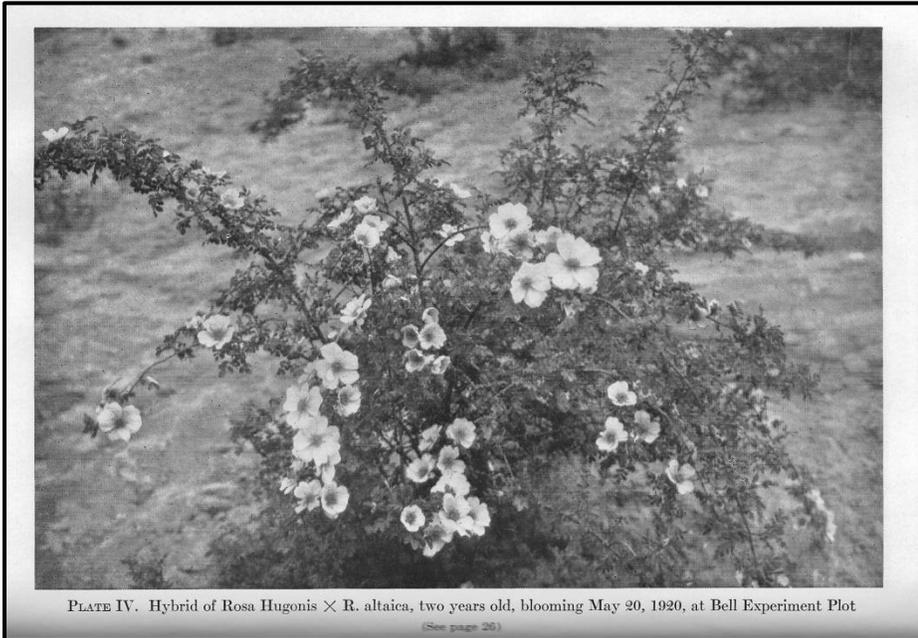


PLATE IV. Hybrid of *Rosa Hugonis* × *R. altaica*, two years old, blooming May 20, 1920, at Bell Experiment Plot

(See page 26)

Rosa hugonis × *Rosa*
spinosissima var. *altaica*

By Dr. Van Fleet
Courtesy 1921 ARA



‘Canary Bird’ – possibly a
hybrid of *R. hugonis* × *R.*
xanthina; intro. before 1945

Courtesy Getty Images



'Cantabrigiensis' — *R. hugonis* x *R. sericea*
Intro. ca. 1922, Hybridized by Dr. C. C. Hurst
Courtesy of Margo Thom



'Midcote Gold' — possibly a hybrid of
R. hugonis x *R. sericea*; Intro. 1948,
Courtesy of David Austin Roses



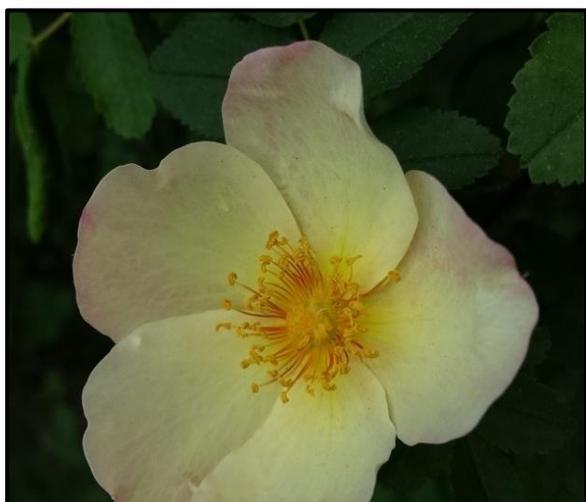
'Headleyensis' - ca. 1920
R. hugonis x *R. spinosissima* var. *altaica*

Right: 'Golden Chersonese'
R. ecae x 'Canary Bird' Intro 1967
Courtesy Simon Voorwinde

Clockwise from middle left:
1-72-1 x *R. hugonis*
bred by Kim Rupert in 2000

R. hugonis x 'Red Nelly' (WS123)
bred by Werner Schenkel in 2009

2 x *R. hugonis* x 'Red Nelly' (WS161)
bred by Werner Schenkel in 2009





"Flore Plena" (dbl-flo. seedling of 1-72-1Hugonis)
bred by Kim Rupert in 2014



'Pink Petticoat' x 1-72-1Hugonis
bred by Kim Rupert in 2012



'Secret's Out' x 1-72-1Hugonis
bred by Kim Rupert in 2014



'Golden Angel' x 1-72-1Hugonis
bred by Kim Rupert in 2013



'Ping Dong Yue Ji' x 1-72-1Hugonis
bred by Kim Rupert in 2014



"Thrive seedling" x 1-72-1Hugonis
bred by Kim Rupert in 2014

greenbladed, limelighted leaves
surround like the sea this shore of
redwhite
pinkish or
yellowish maybe
halfopened oval of petals.

brought to life by the warm brightness of sunlight
in the crispfresh air of morning creation,
pure in fragrance, forever new and
beautiful in their infinity (these are
Roses).

-sph

From the Editor

We had snow! It didn't last very long, but here in Middle Georgia snow is cause for awe and wonder (I hear some of you laughing). Other news – I just celebrated my fourteen year liver transplant anniversary! Please consider signing up to be an organ donor.

My plant of *Rosa hugonis* was purchased from High Country Roses in Denver, CO. I had two or three blooms on my 1' tall plant this past spring. It more than tripled in size during the spring and summer and I'm looking forward to quite a show this coming spring. I can't wait to put its pollen on some things soon after and vice-versa.

I'm excited to be entering a seedling in the Biltmore Gardens trials this year – can't wait to see how it fairs. Additionally, in the near future I may have some news about a newly registered Miniflora with exceptional black spot resistance – will keep everyone posted.

Does anyone else out there in rose world grow camellias? I just attended a seminar at the American Camellia Society headquarters at nearby Masee Lane Gardens. Interestingly, they are trialing a number of camellias, mostly *C. japonicas*, in full sun with surprisingly positive results. I purchased a gorgeous plant of the beautiful and fragrant species *Camellia handelii* – it's single-flowered!

U.S. Retail Sources and Contact Info

Rosa hugonis – Azalea House Flowering Shrub Farm, www.floweringshrubfarm.com; Greenmantle Nursery, www.greenmantlenursery.com; High Country Roses, www.highcountryroses.com; Rogue Valley Roses, www.roguevalleyroses.com.

'Dr. E. M. Mills' – Burlington Rose Nursery, burlingtonroses.com.

'Golden Chersonese' – Greenmantle Nursery, www.greenmantlenursery.com (very limited availability).

Many of the others pictured are not offered in the U.S. or are seedlings that show *R. hugonis*' breeding potential. You must "know someone who knows someone" to obtain them. I hope to have 'Golden Chersonese' this year!

Singularly Beautiful Roses

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Please feel free to share this newsletter with friends and fellow enthusiasts! Thanks to those who graciously gave permission to use their digital images.

Notes

- ¹ Augustine Henry, *Notes on the Economic Botany of China*, Shanghai: Presbyterian Mission Press, 1893, Preface.
- ² E. Charles Nelson, "Of Rosa Hugonis and Father Hugh," *Curtis's Botanical Magazine*, Volume 5, Issue 1, February 1988, 39-41.
- ³ James Britten, editor, *The Journal of Botany, British and Foreign*, Volume 43, 1905, 141, and Volume 44, 1906, 41-44.
- ⁴ *Ibid*, Volume 43, 1905, 137.
- ⁵ Nelson, "Of Rosa Hugonis and Father Hugh," *Curtis's Botanical Magazine*, 39-41.
- ⁶ R. T. Galloway, *Seeds and Plants Imported During the Period From July, 1906, to December 31, 1907: Inventory No. 13; Nos. 19058 To 21730*, Washington Government Printing Office, December 4, 1908, 56.
- ⁷ David Fairchild, "Rosa Hugonis," *Journal of Heredity*, Vol. VI, No. 9, Sept, 1915, American Genetic Association: Washington, D.C., 1915, 429.
- ⁸ *Trees and Shrubs Hardy in the British Isles*, Vol. 2, John Murray Albemarle Street W.: London, 1914, 429-430.
- ⁹ Charles S. Sargent, editor, *Plantae Wilsonianae*, Vol. 2, The University Press: Cambridge, 1916, 331.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid*.
- ¹¹ W. J. Bean, *Bean's Trees and Shrubs Hardy in the British Isles*, Vol. 2, London: John Murray, 1914, 429.
- ¹² *1918 Floral Guide*, The Conard & Jones Co., 80.
- ¹³ *1919 Floral Guide*, The Conard & Jones Co., 4.
- ¹⁴ "Two Chinese Roses," *Bulletin of Popular Information, Arnold Arboretum, Harvard University*, New Series I, Vol. I, No. 5, May 26, 1915, 20.
- ¹⁵ Walter Van Fleet, "Possibilities in American Roses," *American Rose Annual*, 1916, Harrisburg: American Rose Society, 1916, 35.
- ¹⁶ W. Van Fleet, "Rose-Breeding Notes for 1918," *American Rose Annual*, 1919, Harrisburg: American Rose Society, 1919, 31.
- ¹⁷ Horace McFarland, *American Rose Annual*, 1923, Harrisburg: American Rose Society, 1923, 189.
- ¹⁸ McFarland, *American Rose Annual*, 1921, 26-28.