

July 2006

Rose of the Month: 'Marchesa Boccella'

By Suzanne Horn

Our rose of the month for July is a luscious, light pink confection with an ARS Rating of 8.9 known as Marchesa Boccella. Classified by the American Rose Society as a Hybrid Perpetual (HP), Marchesa Boccella was introduced in 1842 by Jean Desprez of Angiers.

Of interest, many believe this beautiful heritage rose to be the same rose as Jacques Cartier, a 1868 Moreau & Robert introduction named after a French explorer. On the other hand, some research speculates that they are two separate roses, with differing growth habits. However, my friend and expert rosarian Bob Martin has opined as follows: *"I have seen no conflict in the description of growth habits not otherwise explained by climate and cultivation... so if I needed to place a bet at the Old Rose window, I'd vote that they are one and the same rose and always have been."*

In any case, you may find that this rose is also known and sold under the names of Jacques Cartier, Marquise Boccell, Marquise Boccella, Marquise Bocella, and Marquise de Boccella. However, for those readers who are exhibitors, take note that this rose must be exhibited under the name of Marchesa Boccella in American Rose Society shows. You will find it to be very successful in competition for the much sought-after "Dowager Queen" trophy.

Categorized by the American Rose Society as a light pink (lp), Marchesa Boccella presents delicate pink pom-pom flowers that blush with a deeper rose at their centers. Its blossoms are fluffy three-inch rosettes with densely overlapping petals and a charming "button eye" in the middle.

The foliage on this rose is light green

and grows right up to the blushing pink blooms with no unsightly long peduncles. It has been said that the blooms "sit right on top of the foliage, like plates balancing on poles". Although the stem length is relatively short, averaging somewhere around ten inches, those stems lend excellent balance and proportion to the blooms, and the foliage frames each rose perfectly.



By way of growth habit, Marchesa Boccella is upright, compact and hardy. The bush itself is a tidy and well-shaped plant, and it will gradually grow to be about three or four feet high and wide. Its small, manageable size makes Marchesa Boccella a wonderful option for smaller gardens as well as a superb choice as a container plant as long as you utilize a 15-gallon pot or larger.

This rose also has better than average disease resistance, which is a big plus for most gardeners. However, if the rest of your roses are taken over by powdery mildew, Marchesa will eventually go right along with them. In most cases, though, early morning showering of the foliage will keep this rose disease free.

Another advantage is that this plant is somewhat shade tolerant, even though it will do its best in full sun. In addition, its rebloom is very good unlike many other Old Garden Roses; and it reliably produces many flushes of lovely pink blooms throughout our

lengthy growing season.

What's more, let us not forget the intoxicating aspect of fragrance. Like many Old Garden Roses still in commerce today, Marchesa Boccella offers a rich, classic rose scent, providing a sweet fragrance for both the home and garden. Marchesa Boccella has a delicate beauty and wonderful perfume you will seldom find in modern hybrid tea roses. Furthermore, this rose is rich in history like so many old roses, which makes it a very romantic addition to the garden.

For those readers who enjoy exhibiting Old Garden Roses, Marchesa Boccella is one of the best. American Rose Society Vice President, Steve Jones, conducted a survey of the top Old Garden Roses in 1995. At that time, Marchesa Boccella was voted favorite Hybrid Perpetual and came in as Number 9 of overall favorite old garden roses. Roseshow.com, the website that has become the last word in rose show statistics thanks to the

many talents of exhibitor extraordinaire, Bob Martin, reports that in 2004, Marchesa Boccella was rated Number 1 in contention for the coveted Dowager Queen trophy, and it continued to tie for fourth place overall in 2005. Need I say more?

In conclusion, as you plan your garden, I highly suggest you consider including the nostalgic style and lavish fragrance of this lovely hybrid perpetual. It is easy to grow, trouble free, well behaved, and is one of the most dependable of the Old Garden Roses. This makes Marchesa Boccella (or Jacques Cartier ~ "a rose by any other name") an excellent choice for the beginning gardener and the experienced rosarian, as well as a must for lovers of Heritage roses. I highly recommend you give it a try!

Photo by Mark Huss of Del-Chester Rose Society, used with permission.