

The Tallahassee Area Rose Society Dedicates a Peace Garden

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When All-American Rose Selections proposed that local societies plant Peace Rose gardens, the Tallahassee Area Rose Society (TARS) responded in a big way. To plan and build the garden, commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the introduction of Peace and the end of World War II, the TARS began a collaborative effort with the City of Tallahassee Parks and Recreation Department and created the garden as one of the highlights among the city's beautiful landscaped downtown parks.

The TARS includes over 150 members from south Georgia and north Florida, which surrounds the beautiful Old-South City of Tallahassee, Florida's capital. Referred to as the "Red Hills," this part of the South has a rich gardening heritage with the love of flower and rose gardening throughout the area's many parks. Through the years, the City of Tallahassee has established a series of rose gardens, which, because of the warm climate, bloom for up to ten months each year. Tallahassee's Peace Garden is the latest addition to its downtown garden-filled parks, and is located in the Genevieve Randolph Park.

The Tallahassee peace Rose Garden was officially dedicated on April 29 of this year, exactly 50 years to the day that the Peace rose was formally introduced in 1945. Local dignitaries in attendance included TARS President Dr Stuart C. Smith, Deep South District Director Oline Reynolds, Mayor Scott Maddox and Retired Officers Association representative Harry Mitchell, who spoke on behalf of World War II veterans. Also in attendance were members of TARS, plus other city representatives and interested citizens. During her remarks, District Director Oline Reynolds traced the lineage of the Peace rose back to the time of Napoleon, which has special significance for the area's residents, because Napoleon's nephew, Prince Murat, resided in the Tallahassee area during the early 1800s.

Stimulated by the enthusiasm of a small group of TARS rosarians, plans and work on the garden began in 1994 with the City supplying the garden location and providing bed preparation. The TARS used donations from its members to purchase the 32 bushes that comprise the garden. The plants were obtained from Giles Roses of Davenport, Florida, and grafted on Fortuniana rootstock, which has been found to perform well in the Tallahassee area. A dedicated group of TARS members got together on a Saturday morning last November to plant the bushes.

The garden is laid out in a circle with crossing brick walkways. An armillary sundial serves as a focal point in the center of the crossway. A bronze plaque on a polished concrete pedestal commemorates the garden's dedication "to the love of roses and the hope of everlasting world peace".

Ongoing upkeep of the garden is also a joint venture. Members of the TARS continue to provide donations for the purchase of fertilizer, and also do all the pruning and deadheading of the bushes. The City installed a watering system on-site, and is responsible for spraying the garden.

The Historic Tallahassee Preservation Board plans to make the Peace Rose Garden part of its walking tour of downtown Tallahassee, so that visitors to this historic southern capital will have the opportunity to view this symbol of peace.