



In Memory of Gergely Márk, Hungarian rose breeder, or the “Rose Man” (1923-2012)

Our highly esteemed and beloved Friend, Gergely Márk, has passed away in November 2012. His work spanned over fifty years, during which time he brought to life over 800 Hungarian rose varieties.

His entire life was devoted to evaluating and breeding rose varieties. He was a man of iron will and of deep historical and literary erudition, stubbornly persevering but showing extensive expertise, plus he had an excellent sense of humour. His work is a worthy continuation of Hungarian rose breeding traditions, as represented by Mihály M. Horváth, Rudolf Geschwind and the Mühle brothers.

After graduating from the University of Agricultural Sciences of Budapest in 1950, Gergely Márk worked at the Horticultural Research Institute of Budapest. Simultaneously with his rose breeding activities, this is where he established one of the largest rose gardens of Europe of those times. From his retirement in 1981, he continued his work almost entirely from his own resources in his own garden, the Garden of Hungarian Roses, located in Törökbálint, near Budapest. His roses received international recognition on several occasions. For instance, his hybrid tea rose 'Budatétény' won the gold medal at the "Internationale Gartenausstellung" (IGA) in Hamburg in 1963 for its novel, peachy, yellowish-red colour, while 'Saint Elizabeth of Hungary' won the gold medal in Rome in 2000 in the category of climber and park roses.

Gergely Márk also wrote several scientific publications. His book, "Die Rose", published by VEB Landwirtschaftsverlag, Berlin in 1962, won a silver medal in Paris in 1964. His lexical work, the "Book of Hungarian Roses", was published in 2004 in Hungarian by Mezőgazda Kiadó in Budapest.

Over 80% of his rose varieties were created exclusively on open ground and thus are well adapted to extreme Hungarian climatic and weather conditions. Several of them are well suited to decorating public parks as well.

The proportion of Hungarian roses that show above average frost resistance, their long blossoming periods, the intensity of the petals' colour effects and the frequency of the stamen being visible, are all worthy of note. These characteristics are frequently accompanied by a pleasant scent. 'Saint Elizabeth of Hungary', Gergely Márk's gold medallist rose, meets the above criteria to the greatest extent. This rose has deservedly achieved increasing popularity in the course of the last few years even beyond the borders of Hungary. It is to be found not only in private collections, but also in several well known public rose gardens throughout Europe. This rose has even found its way to Japan, Canada and the U.S.

Gergely Márk received a number of distinguished State and professional awards for his work. But the fact that the number of public rose gardens preserving Márk rose varieties has been increasing for the past few years can be viewed as the greatest recognition of his life's work. In addition, the initiative to ensure the survival of Márk roses is moving forward in a promising way. Several hundred Márk varieties were propagated successfully on new grounds in 2012. This autumn some German private gardens also accepted a few Márk varieties for the purpose of preserving them. Although the survival of the Márk legacy is far from secure, we are hopeful that the greatest possible number of Márk roses will live on for our descendants. And thus the purpose of Gergely Márk's life may be achieved, or as he put it into words:

"I strive to make the world more beautiful with my roses. To the joy of people."

A Márk documentary film, which has also won a gold medal since, was finished and presented on 27 October 2012, Gergely Márk's 89th birthday, as a result of its creators' selfless labour. Its title is "The Rose Man". The memory of "The Rose Man", the modest, persevering and loyal friend will live on in our hearts with deep gratitude and thankfulness.

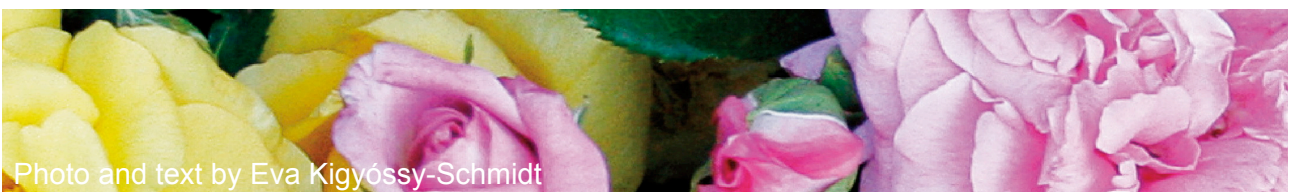


Photo and text by Eva Kigyóssy-Schmidt