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Quest-Ritson, C.: **Climbing Roses of the World**. - Timber Press, Portland - Cambridge 2003. 306 pp., 200 colour photographs. ISBN 0-88192-563-2.

The rhodologic book is rather extensive, whether it concerns works about wild roses and their taxonomy, nomenclature, morphology, physiology, phytoecography, *etc.*, or literature dealing with cultivated garden roses that have accompanied mankind for thousands of years. With the exception of only a few works, *e.g.* Williams (1913), Thomas (1965), and Stevens (2003), there probably do not exist too many of such highly specialized publications on rhodology, devoted only to climbing roses, as this one written by Quest-Ritson.

In the 14 chapters he is partly trying to put some order into the maybe chaotic opinions concerning classification and origin of such an inorganic group as the “climbing roses”, and he partly describes their history with all its peripeties he managed to research, and deduct, which is definitely a more successful part.

The term “climbing roses” is a purely horticultural, technical term, and to a certain extent a confusing one. Roses in their enormous diversity and polymorphism are not bushes, but leaning climbers most often. They lean on their support with the help of their thorns (in particular, the hook-like thorns) and short flower-bearing branchlets. It is possible to insert the equals sign between the terms “climber” and “climbing plant”. Even our briar roses are leaning climbers, *i.e.* they are climbing roses as well as the majority of the wild and cultivated roses. Therefore, the horticultural term “climbing roses” identifies those (cultivated) roses that grow significantly longer sparsely branched shoots that can be tied to a trellis or to another kind of support soon - or they can be left to climb into treetops - or they can creep on the ground as ground-covering roses.

Quest-Ritson has searched the past of those cultivated roses that have been identified as the climbing ones and he acquainted the readers (or, to be more exact, students) of this book with potential former sources of the existing cultivars. He presents Chinese roses from the *Synstylae* section, including the remarkable and problematic gigantic rose, *Rosa gigantea* and the proper Chinese rose (*Rosa chinensis*). The European adherent-style roses could be a similar source: the deciduous *Rosa arvensis*

and the evergreen *R. sempervirens*. The long, stoloniferous shoots are characteristic for the *Synstylae* section regardless of the continent from which they come. Therefore, another chapter is dedicated to the American roses from this group; the basis of this group forms the American prairie rose, *Rosa setigera*. However, the most essential influence on the climbing and multiflorescent roses development has *Rosa multiflora* and its relative, *R. wichuraiana* (it is mentioned in the book under the frequent name, *R. wichurana*).

Attention has been paid not only to the early cultivated roses with a part of “east Asian blond”, to noisettes and to the first tea roses (this name has nothing in common with the colour of the roses but with their scent!) - but to the recent climbing roses as well, *i.e.* to the descendants of the first patented rose in the world, the New Dawn cultivar (1930), to the world famous hybrids of the German firm Kordes and, in particular, to the newest, spontaneous “long-shooted” mutations, the so-called sports of common bed roses, polyanthes or tea roses, that are usually named after the original cultivar with the appellation “Climbing”. The last listing includes a summary of large-flowered climbing roses listed according to the sequence of their breeding at the end (not only) of the 20th century and their introduction to the market by the most important rose growers in the whole world. Altogether about 2000 thousand cultivars (cultivar names and synonyms) are mentioned in this book in various connections and 70 botanical taxa on the level of species or interspecies or on the level of named primary hybrids.

Of course it was impossible to picture all the taxa mentioned; for that matter the book is neither an atlas nor an aid for determination of roses, but it is more a historically tuned genealogy of an artificial, nevertheless practical horticultural group of “climbing roses”. It will serve theoretical rhodologists and similar specialists more than that to the broad public, who is interested more in the beauty and scent of roses than in climbing roses history and origin.

In any case this is a useful book.

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