

THE ROLE OF THE BRITISH ASSOCIATION OF ROSE BREEDERS

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HISTORY AND ROLE

The British Association of Rose Breeders (B.A.R.B.) is a non-profit association whose aim is:

(a) To license growers to propagate protected rose cultivars for sale and administer and monitor the numbers being grown.

(b) To collect royalties on behalf of rose breeders and/or their agents.

(c) To represent members' interests in all matters appertaining to Plant Breeders' Rights.

(d) To promote "New Roses".

After Plant Breeders' Rights were introduced in 1964 individual rose breeders licensed certain rose growers to propagate their new roses but this was found to be inefficient and expensive for both breeders and growers alike. It also had the disadvantage of different systems being operated by different breeders and, more particularly, did not promote the growing of the newer roses.

In the winter of 1972 a number of breeders joined together. The group included those well known names, Jack Harkness, Pat Dickson, and the late Alec Cocker and, after a great deal of hard work, B.A.R.B. was born in May 1973. Jack Harkness became the first secretary and was the author of the Rules and the Licence terms.

The aim of this small band of rose breeders was to create an organisation that could be used to licence growers and collect royalties in an easy and efficient way and, what was more important, develop one system so that all growers could propagate new roses without a great deal of paperwork.

B.A.R.B. now has a membership of 24 UK breeders and breeders' agents and 14 overseas guest members and, in all, represents 50 different rose breeders, some of whom are amateurs.

The Plant Variety Rights Office requires an overseas holder of Plant Breeders' Rights to have a UK representative or agent and B.A.R.B.'s full membership is only open to U.K. based nurseries whose main business is in the U.K., so overseas breeders appoint

¹ B A R B President

a U.K. agent. B.A.R.B. will also represent an amateur rose breeder but here again that breeder must be represented by a U.K. nurseryman. No rose breeder is refused membership providing he has been granted or operates Plant Breeders' Rights for a rose cultivar in the U.K. and abides by the Association rules.

The Association is run by a full time professional secretary who works in close liaison with the elected officers and with two part-time field officers. We now license around 250 growers to grow all or any of the 450 or so rose cultivars that are protected by Plant Breeders' Rights in the U.K.

The Association is funded by subscriptions from its members and a levy which is a proportion of the breeders' royalty income.

In order to make itself more efficient and effective the Association has, during the last four years, invested in a computer system with custom written software which not only handles all royalty invoicing and disbursements, but also provides valuable market and cultivar information to its members.

THE SYSTEM

The system is quite simple, easily understood, and has been operating successfully for 17 years. A grower who wishes to propagate protected rose cultivars applies to B.A.R.B. for a licence and, providing he is known to be a responsible nurseryman one is

There is no charge to growers for registration, though there is a "minimum charge"; where a licensee's annual royalty account before VAT is less than £30.00 it is made up to that amount to cover the cost of administering the account, issuing standard documentation, mailshots, and other such costs.

In May each year, B.A.R.B. sends to all licensed growers "The Offer" which contains a list, submitted by all the breeders (or breeders' agents) of all the protected roses available in the U.K. "The Offer" highlights the new introductions for that year and gives descriptions and information about fragrance and other relevant information as well as the various royalty rates.

Budwood is supplied to the growers free of charge by the breeders, providing the nursery has not grown that cultivar before; even so, some breeders will supply budwood free if the nursery is increasing the quantity it is growing of a particular cultivar.

Royalty rates are a matter for the individual breeders, but all breeders give a 40% "discount" to allow for losses and bad takes; 40% was chosen as most nurseries have saleable crops, taken as an average, of better than 60% of the crop budded. Some breeders also offer a discount for growing larger quantities of their cultivars.

Each grower is required to make a return before the end of September in each year of the numbers of protected rose cultivars he has propagated. B.A.R.B. raises one account for the royalties covering all the breeders. This is payable by the end of March in the year following the year of propagation. The grower pays B.A.R.B. just one cheque to cover the royalties of the roses he propagates from any of the breeders. B.A.R.B. breaks down this cheque and disburses the relevant royalties back to the individual breeder members or breeders' agents.

MONITORING THE NUMBERS BEING GROWN

B.A.R.B.'s policy is that it is fair to every grower regardless of his size and how he operates—in fact, the “Standard Conditions” have been vetted by the Office of Fair Trading, and any alternatives to them have to be similarly vetted before issue. It, therefore, falls to us to check the returns from time to time; this is done by our two field officers. They do their checks by physically counting the cultivars on the nursery, by checking against catalogues and, with the help of our Secretary and the computer, using the information we hold.

Our checks are not only to protect our breeders but also to ensure that no grower gets a price advantage over another by not paying all the royalties due.

PLANT BREEDERS' RIGHTS

There is a flood of new legislation in the pipeline in connection with Plant Breeders' Rights as follows:

- (a) Revision of the U.P.O.V. Convention.
- (b) Proposed European Community Plant Breeders' Rights Scheme.
- (c) Draft European Community Directive on the legal protection of biotechnological inventions, and (because of the above)
- (d) The problems of interface between Patent Protection and Plant Breeders' Rights.

All these matters, together with the day to day Plant Breeders' Rights legislation, are handled by the B.A.R.B. Secretary, supported by the Association's Solicitor, who is well versed in these matters. Our Secretary is also helped in this field, but to a much lesser extent, by a small committee of breeder members who help with interpreting how the new legislation will affect rose breeders.

MARKETING "THE ROSE"

Promoting "new roses" is not as easy as it sounds, because we must be even handed to all our breeder members. Our marketing mix consists of:

The recent appointment of a Press Officer.

Breeder/grower co-operation in the joint promotion of "Rose of the Year".

B.A.R.B. keeps growers informed of all new and existing protected cultivars and distributes to all licensed growers "colour work" of new roses as supplied by breeder members.

The newsletter, "*B.A.R.B. News and Views*" which is edited by our Hon. Vice-President, Jack Harkness, and circulated all over the world.

Holding open days from time to time to enable breeders, growers, and the media to discuss matters of mutual interest.

Cooperation with the R.N.R.S., with a stand at the Chelsea Flower Shows, with the objective of showing the gardening public new award-winning cultivars.

Cooperation with Burrell + Floraprint in extending their range of colour work to include many more new roses.

The joint Rose Growers Association /B.A.R.B. Rose of the Year promotion has proved a real boost for rose sales. With the exception of one Rose of the Year, all the others between 1982 and 1989 are in the Top 20 B.A.R.B. cultivars stocked by growers.

To demonstrate our success, the number of protected roses produced has increased from 2.28 million in 1973 to 6.2 million in 1989.

Information about current total rose production is not very well documented but B.A.R.B. enquiries lead us to believe that protected roses now account for almost a quarter of the total rose market in the U.K.