The History and Evolution of Star® Roses and Plants/Conard-Pyle

Planting Roots For The Future

In 1897 when the Conard and Jones Co. started, roses were just beginning to appear in people's gardens.

A century later Star® Roses and Plants/Conard-Pyle, as it is known today, has introduced some of the most popular roses and other plants in the industry -- and has made them accessible to gardens throughout the world. For decades the company has had many “firsts” that have helped shape America's gardens and the nursery industry.

First With Plant Guarantees

The earliest of these “firsts” were guarantees. The 1904 spring catalog promises, "safe delivery to all post offices in the US." The 1907 catalog pledges "Conard and Jones roses to bloom each at its seasonable time." This was followed by the headline, "A new way to buy roses: Our roses are guaranteed to bloom." To the best of the company’s knowledge, this was the first guarantee to the consumer in the nursery industry. Robert Pyle’s magazine, Success with Roses -- a classic for rose lovers for many years -- provided tips that took the guarantees a step further.

Innovation through trademarks, patents

Pyle, who joined the company in 1900 and became its head in 1907, was a marketing genius and savvy entrepreneur. He decided to focus the company's marketing efforts on roses, establishing The Conard and Jones Co. as a primary grower of roses in America. To reinforce his marketing strategy and set his company's roses apart from those of the competition, he adopted and trademarked the word "Star" in 1908, thus creating "Star® Roses." This became one of the first horticultural trademarks, one Star® Roses and Plants/Conard-Pyle is known for over 100 years later.

Dingee & Conard Co. of West Grove, PA grows and distributes fruit trees to Pennsylvania, Maryland and New Jersey farmers.
Pioneer In Forging European Alliances

While other nurserymen traveled to Europe early in the century, Pyle seems to be the first nurseryman to forge partnerships with European hybridizers and to bring their creations to the American market. Pyle’s alliance with Meilland International in the south of France dates back to the 1930’s and has resulted in numerous introductions, including the Peace Rose.

First In Miniatures

In 1933 Star® Roses and Plants/Conard-Pyle became the first nursery in the US to introduce a miniature rose. Known as Tom Thumb, this rose was created by Dutch nurseryman Jan de Vink and was an instant success because of its unique size. A true duplicate of the garden rose, it was the first rose that could be planted in window boxes, porch containers and rock gardens.

More than half a century later, in 1989, Star® Roses and Plants/Conard-Pyle had another diminutive introduction, Debut™ (Meibarke) which became the first miniature rose to win an AARS award.

Industry Leader, Award Winner

Robert Pyle was among the industry leaders who established All American Rose Selections, Inc. Its mission today is the same as when it was established in 1938, to test and evaluate new roses and then to publicize the award winners. Today AARS has test and demonstration gardens across the nation, including one at Star® Roses and Plants/Conard-Pyle’s facilities in West Grove, PA.

Star® Roses and Plants has had dozens of AARS winners over the years. One of the most famous is the ‘Peace’ rose, which Francis Meilland dispatched to Star® Roses and Plants/Conard-Pyle on one of the last aircrafts to leave France before it crumbled under the Nazi blitzkrieg. During
In what was then thought to be a daring move, CP ceases its field grown nursery operation and becomes one of the first container production nurseries in the eastern US.

Recognizing changing times and opportunities, CP eliminated its retail stores and mail order business to give full attention to production and wholesale sales.

CP leadership passes to the third generation of the Hutton family as Steven B. Hutton becomes president and R. J. Hutton became chairman of the board.

More recently, in 1970, Star® Roses and Plants/Conard-Pyle introduced the Blue and China Hollies, generally considered one of the best ornamental plant introductions of the decade and perhaps the century. Breeder Kathleen Meserve created a family of hollies that combine the hardiness of the American Holly with the rich glossy leaves and large bright berries of the English Holly.

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Other Firsts And More Ahead

Star® Roses and Plants/Conard-Pyle has had a century of firsts. It was one of the first on the east coast to become a container production nursery. It introduced the first climbing rose (Mme. Gregoire Staechelin -- 1928) to win “The Gold Medal of Bagatelle” award in Paris. It also introduced the first rose suited to both garden and greenhouse (Sonia) and the first roses (Sunblaze®) to fit between traditional floribundas and true miniature roses.

To maintain its tradition of innovation in its second 100 years, Star® Roses and Plants/Conard-Pyle has introduced The Knock Out® Family of Roses and The Drift® Roses, both breakthroughs in rose breeding. The company is also involved directly in breeding perennials and woody plants through an investment in and close collaboration with NovaFlora, a creator of new genetics. It continues to bring new varieties of roses and plants to the public. And, as always, it continues to look for innovative ways to beautify the American landscape.

Introduced to the market in 2007, Drift® Groundcover Roses are a cross between full-size groundcover roses and miniature roses. From the former they kept toughness, disease resistance and winter hardiness. From the miniatures, they inherited their well-managed size and repeat-blooming nature.
INTRODUCING
OUR NEW BRAND
now offering
ROSES, SHRUBS & PERENNIALS

2013
Star® Roses and Plants