



'Soaring Spirits' is one of nine new roses being sold to help finance the project.

GENE SASSE / WEEKS ROSES

'Remember Me' Rose Gardens

The events of 9/11 have inspired many people to seek solace and honor victims through the healing power of plants. One dedicated group of volunteers, headed by Sue Casey, right, of Portland, Ore., has worked for nearly three years to create 'Remember Me' Rose Gardens (www.remember-me-rose.org).



MICHAEL KEMPLE

"Like so many others (after the terrorist attacks), I needed to do something," Casey said. "But I'm in Oregon, and didn't know how or what I could do to help."

While getting into her car on Sept. 26, 2001, Casey found her inspiration. A rosebush with a single yellow flower caught her eye — and sparked a plan.

"Roses are associated with love, and everyone who died that day was loved by someone," Casey said. "We want that love to carry on in the 'Remember Me' Rose Gardens. Each rosebush will affirm life by continuing to bloom year after year."

Casey is working with authorities to place 2,978 rosebushes — one for every 9/11 victim — at or near each of the three crash sites. She hopes that planting will start by 2008. Rosarian Michael Mitchell of New Jersey — see his Success Story on Page 27 — plans to oversee planting and maintenance of all three gardens.

So far, Casey, a law office receptionist, has funded much of this effort herself. The introduction and sale of nine new roses also will help finance the project. The first introduction, a fiery red hybrid tea rose called 'Firefighter,' is being sold through Edmunds' Roses of Wilsonville, Ore. (www.edmundsroses.com.) The second rose, 'Soaring Spirits,' to honor those lost in the World Trade Center towers, has just been released and should be widely available soon at nurseries and garden centers. Others will be named to honor the New York Police Department, the Port Authority Police, those lost at the Pentagon and those aboard the four crashed jetliners.

Sadly, the 25-year-old rosebush that inspired Casey's efforts died this past spring.

"But not before 'Remember Me' Rose Gardens took on a life of its own," she said. — *Lynda DeWitt*

RIDGEFIELD PARK, NEW JERSEY

Michael Mitchell

HE GREW UP in a second-floor apartment in Parsippany, N.J. He graduated from college with a degree in English literature. Soon after college, he started a company that cleaned upholstery and carpets. But today, Michael Mitchell is a highly qualified rosarian and the owner of his own business, Rose Gardens by Michael.



HANNAH MITCHELL

How did *that* happen?

"When I bought my first house, I planted four rosebushes," Mitchell said. "And I nearly killed them."

That winter, he devoured every book he could find on roses. The following spring, he bought 100 roses — and they did much

better. More reading during the winter was followed the next spring by the purchase of 50 more roses.

Mostly as a lark, Mitchell entered the 1994 Garden State Rose Show sponsored by the American Rose Society. To the surprise of many, including himself, he won Best in Show for 'Brandy' and Third Best in Show for 'Secret.'

"Not only did I love growing roses, but I turned out to be pretty good at it," Mitchell said.

Surrendering to his bliss, Mitchell closed the upholstery and carpet cleaning business.

One of his first jobs was creating a rose garden as a tribute to Elias Stratis, who died in the crash of Pan Am Flight 103 in Lockerbie, Scotland, in 1988. Stratis' widow, Mary Kay, loved roses and asked Mitchell to create a place of solace for her and her children.

Years later, Stratis was counseling families of Sept. 11 victims in her rose garden. One connection led to another, and soon Mitchell was put in touch with Sue Casey of Portland, Ore., who was working to create rose gardens at the three crash sites. (Read about 'Remember Me' Rose Gardens on Page 39.) Now, teamed with Casey, Mitchell will oversee planting and maintenance of all three gardens.

In addition, Mitchell maintains more than 30 other properties including Gardens at Wycoff, a public garden with 600 roses.

"It's a great job," he said. "I'm very lucky to have found my passion." — *Lynda DeWitt*

MITCHELL'S METHOD

- "To prevent diseases, don't 'overhead' water. Choose resistant varieties and spray diluted Neem Oil on them every seven to 10 days."
- "Make sure your soil is loose enough. Dig a hole at least 18 inches across and 18 inches deep. Fill with five parts topsoil, four parts compost or other organic matter and one part coarse sand."

NORTHPORT, LONG ISLAND

Joan Hauser & Lee Belrose

ASHAROKEN AVENUE is a three-mile causeway that links the communities of Northport and Eaton's Neck on Long Island. Residents of the waterfront area of Eaton's Neck must travel this road, which residents call "the strip," to get anywhere.

"It was really pretty dreary," said Joan Hauser, a member of the Asharoken Garden Club who lives along the causeway.

Then, six years ago, Hauser spotted a beautiful little garden planted along "the strip."

"I thought 'Wow!'" she said. "All of it could be beautiful like this."

Soon afterward, the club began the Street Garden Recognition Program. Club member Lee Belrose designed and painted 30 signs that she and Hauser awarded to gardens along Asharoken Avenue.

The idea caught on and expanded to include street gardens in both Eaton's Neck and Northport. Last year, 64 residents entered their gardens in the program; this year the number rose to 83.

Armed with maps and clipboards, the judges — club members

LEE'S LESSON

- "To grow dahlias, it is still essential at the beginning of the growing season to add nutrients to the soil. I use a 5-10-5 formula. In the middle of the season, I add a blossom booster, which contains phosphate. This increases the number and size of my dahlia blooms."



LYN DOBRIN

Lee Belrose, left, and Joan Hauser are making Long Island more beautiful.

who aren't allowed to enter the competition — traverse the neighborhoods in June. They rate each of the gardens on several criteria, such as how well the garden is maintained and its visibility from the street. The top 30 gardens are awarded a Belrose plaque.

"We've found that when one person gets a plaque, the next year the neighbor enters," Hauser said.

Some homeowners, such as Hauser's next-door neighbor Bill Hosie, receive an award every year.

"His cottage garden is an inspiration to me," she said.

And no doubt, Hauser and Belrose have been an inspiration to many as well. — *Lyn Dobrin*