

# Father Hugo: This sunny, early rose has a tough disposition

**BY LEE REICH**  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

After showing his sunny face, Father Hugo has once again left for the season. Father Hugo the rose, that is.

Distinctive foliage, however, earns the plant its keep throughout the summer.

Father Hugo is among the earliest roses to bloom, a floral hors d'oeuvre to the full-blown show that follows from hybrid tea, rambling and climbing roses.

Each of Father Hugo's blossoms opens with a single row of canary-yellow petals, the petals spreading to create a golden cup. Each bloom is a couple of inches across, and so charming that you can't really fault them for their lack of strong fragrance.

**BEAUTY BEYOND JUST FLOWERS**

Early blooms with a sunny disposition are not the only qualities of this rose. Although the blossoms appear but once a season, the compound leaves, made up of a dozen or so leaflets, each only about a half-inch long, lend the whole bush a delicate, ferny appearance. In some years and in some gardens, the leaves put on a decent autumn show as they turn red, yellow or purplish brown.

These leaves and flowers are borne on gracefully arching stems that form a clump 6 feet high and wide. The stem's mahogany-brown bark provides a pleasing foil for the light green color of the leaves. Thorns are thankfully few.

**A WORTHY WILDING**

Father Hugo's rose is a "species" rose, a wild plant grown in gardens without any further improvement. Contrast this, for example,

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Submitted photo  
Located in Hillsborough, this energy efficient, custom 1,848-square-foot home by M Squared Builders & Designers consists of three bedrooms and two baths.

# Energy efficient, right-sized and custom, one year later

**BY REBECCA R. NEWSOME, MIRM**

Just over a year ago, we reported on the custom home built for Barry and Anne Weston by M Squared Builders & Designers. The design of this 1,848 square foot home consists of three bedrooms and two baths, with two of the bedrooms also functioning as offices. In place of a formal dining room, an oversized nook accommodates the Weston's drop leaf dining table. Using the table leaf and the kitchen bar, they have comfortably seated as many as 12 for a meal, and they've been pleased to have a place for overnight guests to sleep in their offices when needed.

The kitchen/nook area is reminiscent of Barry's grandmother's "social kitchen." It's large enough to accommodate arm chairs and lamps for after dinner conversation and reading. The kitchen features large drawers under the counter instead of cabinets, relieving Anne from having to get on her hands and knees to search for Tupperware lids, among other often-hard-to-find items. The nook's sliding glass doors open to the deck, in which the Westons requested heavy gauge wire vs. deck rails, so they could easily view the tranquil woods beyond the deck.



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The kitchen features large drawers under the counter instead of cabinets, relieving Anne from having to get on her hands and knees to search for Tupperware lids, among other often-hard-to-find items.

"Every day we've lived here, either Barry or I have said, out loud, 'I love our house' says Anne. "We let Michele Myers, the President of M Squared Builders and Designers, know how happy we are every time we see her. Michele's process is very, very good. She had us make a lot of decisions up

front, which worked tremendously to our advantage. She was a dream to work with, and if we were to ever build another home, there's no question... We would work again with M Squared."

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# Mystery plant: 'Savanna milkweed,' Asclepias lanceolata

**BY JOHN NELSON**

Of course, we all know Forrest Gump's beautiful city with its midnight gardens, as well as the river that flows between Georgia and South Carolina, but a savanna is different.

In the Southeast, a savanna is an ecosystem situated in the coastal plain, largely dominated by pines (mostly longleaf pine), and featuring a variety of sandy soils, these periodically wet. Savannas have been known historically as some of the most biologically diverse habitats on our planet, featuring enormous numbers of plant and animal species. A requirement for the development and continued existence of savanna habitat has been periodic fires, largely from lightning strikes, that would burn away undergrowth and shrubs, allowing the formation of a rich layer of herbaceous plants, including grasses, sedges, orchids, ferns, lilies, milkweeds, sunflowers, hatpins, meadow-beauties, and carnivorous sundews and pitcher plants,

among other things, a number of which are very, very rare.

Historically, coastal savannas were known from southeastern Virginia all the way to Texas, but sadly, very few of the original savannas remain, having fallen away to progress and development, and to the suppression of natural forest fires. Many of the plants native to them remain, however, but sometimes only along open ditch lines that are so common along our country roads. Although ditch lines along highways usually receive little acclaim, they can act as savanna remnants or "refugia", providing the last possible habitats for various plants (and animals) after the surrounding landscape has been altered.

Here's a savanna plant that is really spectacular. It's a milkweed, and sure enough, its tissues contain plenty of white, sticky latex, which gives this group of species its common name. (The more common, and related, low-growing butterfly-weed is also a part of this group, but its sap is clear, not milky.) Our

Mystery Plant has a smooth, unbranched stem, up to 4 feet tall. Four or five pairs of skinny leaves will be found on the stem, with brilliant flowers in several clusters at the top. Each flower has five small sepals at its base, pretty much hidden by the five bright red petals. Above each petal will be a bright red (or more commonly, orange) structure called a hood, with a sharp-pointed "horn" emerging from the top. Following the flowers, smooth, erect seed pods ("follicles") will form, these eventually releasing wind-borne seeds, floating by means of a tuft of silky hairs.

This species is a regular inhabitant of coastal savannas, or savanna remnants, and occurs from New Jersey south through Florida and west to Texas. If you'd like to see it in its natural landscape, you might investigate savanna sites at the Francis Marion National Forest (Berkeley and Charleston Counties, SC) or the Nature Conservancy's Green Swamp Preserve (Brunswick County, NC).



Photo by Linda Lee