

Wally's Weekly News 7th June 2008
Written by Wally Richards.

NEW ROSES ARE IN

I visited a couple of garden centres this week and saw all the staff busy potting up and placing the new season's roses out for display in the retail areas. A sea of roses would be an understatement.

I was very impressed with the Standard Roses, where on display, I found the two most popular Standard Roses with a selection of 200 to 300 of each variety. Plenty to choose from to get the best shape and the strongest plants. (Well that's true for the early birds.)

Roses would be the most popular garden plant in New Zealand with most gardeners having one or many specimens growing as bush, standard or climbers.

For some gardeners they are the only feature plants that are really well cared for. It is because of all this attention to roses that gardeners endeavour to have them looking perfect, well shaped, lots of buds and flowers with no blemishes on the foliage.

You can have perfect or near perfect roses if you work with nature rather than against it.

Natural products will promote healthy roses, chemical products designed as rescue remedies and rose foods, will remove the natural balances, causing both insect pests and diseases to run rampant.

In the spring when the new season's growths appear they are perfect and will remain so with a little help from a number of natural, health promoting products.

If on the other hand we apply Rose Fertilisers or Nitrophoska Blue we knock back the vital soil life (micro organisms and worms) because of these product's acidity.

If we then apply chemical rose sprays, we damage the natural immune systems of the plants, causing greater problems, as well as further harming the soil life.

Our poor roses become targets for both insect pests and diseases as these are the cleaners of nature, taking out the weak, sickly plants. Roses are not easily killed but will remain sickly looking for the rest of the season. The situation becomes worse when we need to water, if our tap water contains chlorine.

If you want really healthy roses through the summer you need to either fit a filter on the garden tap to remove the chlorine or have a tub or old bath that you can fill with chlorinated water and leave exposed to the sun to remove the chlorine. Fill the bath late in the day or early morning, use the water next day to water the roses after which refill the bath for the following late afternoon watering. (The filter is easier and less work)

To have really healthy roses (or any plant for that matter) you need to supply all the minerals and elements that the plant needs, feed the soil life and the micro organisms that live on the plants, control any insect pests that sap the vitality and ensure that they have ample moisture and a suitable sunny spot to grow in.

Do this and you will have great roses that everyone will admire.

For a new container grown rose (Standard or Bush) I would pot it into a 45 litre container using a mix of compost, (80%) a bit of soil (15%) and chook manure.(5%)

Under the plant I would place some **Simalith**, **Ocean Solids** and sheep manure pellets. A sprinkling of Dolomite also.

Once planted, the mix will receive a drench of **Magic Botanic Liquid (MBL)** and **Mycorrcin**. About a month later I would prune it to the 3rd out going bud then spray it with **Liquid Copper** to seal the wounds.

When the new foliage appears the plant will receive a 2 weekly spray of **MBL** and

Mycorrcin and on every second spray, **Perkfection** would be added to the spray. If aphids appear on the buds and foliage, they will be sprayed with **Key Pyrethrum**. If the rose is one from good breeding then there should be no further problems. (Note; some modern hybrid roses may have great flowers but will always have health problems)

A sprinkling of **Neem Tree Granules** and **Fruit and Flower Power** on top of the mix every couple of months should keep the plant free of any other insect pests as well as supplying the extra magnesium and potassium needed.

The same principals as above can be applied to roses planted in the open ground.

Make a hole twice the size as needed and mix a good compost with the soil removed (half and half) Use this to line the base of the hole to the right height, place the **Ocean Solids, Simalith** etc on top of this along with the rose. Back fill with the same mix.

Simalith (Rock dust) really assists in great new root development.

If you have a heavy clay soil then ensure the base of the hole and sides are rough, not smooth and apply two or three handfuls of Gypsum to the clay base before the mix. This extra preparation work gives the new rose a great growing area for root establishment.

Ensure that in either method of planting (Open ground or containers) that the soil is kept moist for the following 12 months while the root system is establishing. Do not cut flowers off for vases during the first season, but you can dead head without removing foliage. It is most important that a new rose has as much foliage as possible to gain energy from the sun while establishing.

You can enhance the energy production by spraying the foliage with **Vaporgard** every 3 months which protects the plant from UV damage. (It also makes the leaves a darker green and shiny, also added protection against pests and diseases)

If you use **Vaporgard** then you will need to add **Raingard** to the other sprays on the 2 weekly cycles.

With new roses it is very important that the roots never become dry. There is a great danger that roses purchased from chain stores that only have their roots wrapped, will dry out in the controlled atmosphere of these stores. The roses may have died as a result before you even buy them.

What to do with your existing roses? Cut all bush and standard roses back to half and remove any dead wood and spindly canes. Then spray either with Lime **Sulphur** or **Liquid Copper**. Leave till about end of July and then do your proper pruning and spray the wounds with **Liquid Copper** as you go. Don't prune or cut on damp cool days as this can let Silver Leaf disease into the rose. Pick a warm sunny day when the air is drier.

In the spring place the **Simalith, Ocean Solids** etc, on top of the soil around the base of the rose and cover with a good compost.

Use the natural sprays and products suggested as for the new roses. If you avoid the use of any chemical fertilisers and sprays as well as any chemical herbicides, anywhere near the roses and follow the above natural program, the health of the roses should greatly benefit and you too will be healthier for not using the chemicals. A number of gardeners that have followed my natural advise with their roses and other gardens ring me up to tell me how great their gardens are. Work with Nature, not against it.

Problems ring me at 0800 466464 (Palmerston North 3570606)