

NOVEMBER ROSE GROWING

*Written by **HENRY SEILER**, the 11th installment of 12 articles he wrote in 2008 for The Pensacola Rose newsletter. Henry received the “**Award of Merit**” for Rose Growing Series from The American Rose Society for these 12 articles.*

Well, Gulf Coast rosarians, it's hard to believe November is already here. November is usually a great month for rose growing on the Gulf Coast. It is usually the month we can really enjoy our roses with a minimal amount of effort. This is when the hard work of keeping our roses healthy through the dog days of summer, followed by fall pruning and fertilizing and in some cases the stress of identifying and protecting those perfect blooms for competition in a rose show, REALLY pays off and we can literally slow down and smell the roses. And, judging from my garden, you should have an abundance of roses to smell.

Besides smelling roses what else are Gulf Coast rosarians doing in November? First, let's look at October in review. I hope it was as magical for you as it was for me. I know I'm getting older and my memory isn't as sharp as it once was, but I can't remember an October any better than the one we just had. I think it really lived up to its reputation as being the month of rose magic. The average high was 76 degrees and average low was 59. Over the first 17 days the average high was 82.2 degrees and average low was 66.1 with 85 being the highest and 58 being the lowest. Over the last 14 days the average high was 71.2 degrees and average low was 51.8 with 77 being the highest and 35 being the lowest. And we recorded 7.95 inches of rain (4.13 is normal) although it all came on just two occasions, Oct. 7th and 23rd. For a while I thought the rain event of the 23rd which dumped 5.37 inches in 24 hours might be a repeat of last year but we were spared. As a devout rosarian I always like to see rain but too much of a good thing takes away from its goodness. Even with the above average rainfall in October we are still about six inches below normal for the year.

Although the cooler November temperatures bring out the best in our roses in size and color, the longer, cooler nights also make it more favorable for **powdery mildew** and **botrytis**. And then there's always that chance of an early freeze. So November can also be a suspenseful month. Now there are two things we DON'T want to let up on during the month of November. The first is **watering**. With the fall weather returning to its normal dry condition, water will become once again a number one concern. Roses require less water in the winter but this is still fall. And if you want to get the most out of your roses, you had better provide them with enough water. Although the evaporation of water from the soil has decreased with the days getting shorter and the sun less intense, the air is dryer and strong autumn winds increase the evaporation of moisture from the leaves. I don't agree with the policy of reducing water in the fall to help induce dormancy. The roses will naturally absorb less water as the growth process slows and

their need for water decreases. Strong, healthy bushes make it through harsh winters a lot better than weakened, diseased ones. And keeping them well watered is important in keeping them healthy. And speaking of keeping them healthy, another thing we **SHOULD NOT** let up on is **spraying**. **Mildew** season is right around the corner.

Powdery Mildew spores require cool, humid nights in order to germinate. And, unlike



black spot that requires wet foliage, **powdery mildew** requires the foliage to be dry. And, speaking of the devil, **Black spot** has been held at bay by the wonderful cool dry weather we had been experiencing but that pipe dream is about to end. The weather prediction for the first

week of November calls for daily highs in the upper seventies and nightly lows around sixty. The monster is waiting for an opportunity to strike and those temperatures make it highly probable that we will see some **black spot** before the end of the week. So we need to be prepared. The best spray combo for prevention of **black spot**, and also **mildew**, is **Banner Maxx** at 1/3 to 2/3 teaspoons per gal. combined with either **Manzate**, **Dithane** or **Pentathlon** at 1 tbsp per gal. or now that the weather has cooled **Daconil 2787** or **Daconil ultrex** at 1/2 tbsp per gal. can be used without being concerned about burning the foliage. **Daconil** is also one of the fungicides recommended for **botrytis**. **Banner Maxx**, which is a systemic fungicide, can be rotated with **Cleary's 3336F** at 1 teaspoon per gal. or **Compass** at 1/4 to 1/2 teaspoon per gal. I should mention that **Banner Maxx** is the number one fungicide used by rosarians.

Rosemania now carries **Honor Guard PPZ**, which is the generic version of Banner



Maxx, and it's about ten dollars cheaper. They also now sell **Compass** in the smaller 2 oz. size. The same chemicals we use for **black spot** should help control **Powdery Mildew** As we get into

December the nights get cooler and longer and the humidity climbs above 90% we may have a problem controlling it. Some varieties of roses are more mildew prone than others and some varieties are mildew magnets. One of my favorite minifloras, **Conundrum**, of which I have 10 bushes, is especially prone to **powdery mildew**. There are some fungicides that offer better control than others. One that's been around for many years is **Rubigan** (1/4 to 1/2 tsp. per gal.) And then there's **Systhane** and **Eagle 20 EW (liquid Systhane)** (1/3 to 2/3 tsp. per gal.) and **ERASE** (4 tsp. per gal.) to name a few. Roses getting too much shade are more susceptible than those grown in full sunlight. And, if **Black spot** and **Powdery Mildew** aren't enough reasons to continue spraying throughout the winter look at some of your spent blooms that have been on the bush awhile. That gray-black mold is **botrytis**. It seems that



December is the peak month. **Botrytis** thrives in cool, wet conditions. If left to continue it will spread from the blooms to the foliage and even infect the canes. This is why I strongly advocate removing spent blooms as soon as possible. The disease affects all blooms but is most destructive to the

larger blooms with many petals that are slow to open. As I mentioned earlier, **Daconil** is

commonly recommended for controlling **botrytis**. Some specialty products that have shown to be effective are **Medallion** (1/2 tsp. per gal.), **Decree 50% WDG** (1 tsp. per gal.) and **Chipco 26019** (1 tsp. per gal. to control, 2 tsp. per gal. to eradicate). These products are rather expensive and their effectiveness on the gulf coast is questionable. But if you're interested, you can order them from **Southern Ag** (1-800-477-3285) or **B and T Grower Supply** (1-800-748-6487).

The more disease that we eradicate this fall and winter, the less trouble we will have in the spring. This is why I recommend that spraying for fungus be continued until dormancy. Here on the gulf coast it's more likely that the rosarians will become dormant before the roses do.

Even though the weather has cooled, it hasn't cooled enough yet to bring the pest parade to a screeching halt. The mighty **spider mites** seem to be a perennial threat to our roses so continued vigilance is important. **Corn earworm** moths and **thrips** have



been active until a few nights ago when the night temps dipped into the 30's. But if my hunch is correct, they aren't finished for the season. Don't let these pests ruin your November roses. I have been including **conserve** (1/2 tsp. per gal.) with my weekly spray. It has been working

well and I am even seeing more honey bees than in recent years. You can even mist the buds and blooms every few days. Most 4 rosarians get the best results from **Conserve SC** (1/2 tsp. per gal.) and choose it because it doesn't seem to bother the honeybees and the friendly insects that help keep spider mites under control. Some use **Merit 75 WSP** (1/8 tsp. per gal.) or **Talstar** (1/2 Tbs. per gal.). Others use **Orthene 97 WP** (3/4 tsp. per gal.) or **Cygon 2E** (2 tsp. per gal.) or **Mavrik** (1/4 tsp. per gal.). These insecticides are effective but they aren't as easy on the friendly insects. Some rosarians



alternate each time they spray. Be sure to check frequently for **spider mites**. They are more sluggish and, like me, don't move as fast in cold weather but they are every bit as destructive to the foliage. And, they seem to be sneakier at this time of year because

we really don't expect to see them. If they are detected, try washing them off using a water wand. If you have a heavy infestation and you want to save your bushes you may want to invest in a good **miticide**. There are now several to choose from: **Avid** (1/4 tsp. per gal.), **Floramite** (1/4 to 1/2 tsp. per gal.), **Akari 5SC** (2 tsp. per gal.), **TetraSan** (1/2 tsp. per gal.) **Hexygon** (1/2 tsp. per gal.), **Ovation** (1/4 tsp. per gal.) and **Forbid** (1/4 tsp. per gal.) **Avid** has been on the market for over 20 years and still does a good job. Until recently, it was only available in the pint size. Now, both **Avid** and **Floramite** are available in the 8 oz. size. Most of the chemicals we use can be ordered from **Rosemania** (1-888-600-9665) or **H. L. Shealy Co.** (1-803-892-2651). Both are supporters of the **American Rose Society**. And some of these chemicals will soon be

available locally from **Lesco (John Deere)** who has moved to a new location (33 Brent Lane). I think the phone number is the same (484-7372).

As the growing season gradually winds down and the growth process slows the roses will gradually enter a state of semi-dormancy and harden somewhat. Note that I said *semidormancy*. Although this is a natural process, there are some things we can do to help them along and reduce the shock of, God forbid, freezing temperatures. This is known as **operation slowdown**. The more succulent growth present at the time of a freeze, the greater the chance of freeze damage. Because high nitrogen fertilizers stimulate new succulent growth, the general consensus is to discontinue the application of fertilizers containing nitrogen after the first of November or use only fertilizers with a low nitrogen content like 4:12:12. Some rosarians apply fertilizers like 0:10:10 or 0:20:20. The phosphate helps strengthen the root system (which remains active in the winter), the potassium hardens the bushes, and helps reduce cold damage.

This widely accepted practice of operation slowdown has been challenged over the years by a few rose growers from Texas and Louisiana who continue to fertilize throughout the year. They claim that the bushes will not absorb any more nutrients than they need and that winter-fed roses go through the winter better than those that have been deprived of fertilizer. In our area the roses remain active most of the year, sometimes not even showing the slightest indication of dormancy. This is because there is never a sustained cold period lasting long enough to complete the complex metabolic process involved in promoting true dormancy. And who says that modern roses **NEED** a period of dormancy? Just ask the rosarians in the southern half of the Deep South District. Soooo, there may be something to year round feeding. But here in the panhandle of Florida we never know what old man winter has in store. The last few winters have been rather mellow and fertilizing bimonthly with a water soluble formula would have had some merit, but one has to weigh the little benefit against the cost and effort of this practice, and the chances of a severe freeze must also be taken into consideration.

This would be a good time to have your soil pH checked. My soil pH seems to always be lower than desirable so I will apply about two cups of lime around each large bush in the bed and one cup to those in large pots. I will also apply 1 to 2 cups of gypsum per bush to help leech out undesirable salts and help loosen up compacted soil. The problem with applying lime and gypsum to the top of the soil is that they penetrate so slowly and take forever to work. They work much faster when mixed with the soil. Since we can't do this with established beds, except when putting in a new bush, we have to apply these amendments several times during the year.

Many rosarians discontinue cutting blooms after the first of December. Cutting blooms encourages new growth. They simply pull off the petals and let the hips remain. Their

claim is that the energies will be shunted toward hip formation and root development and the conversion of free sugar to starch. But we have to look at the other side of the coin. Leaving spent blooms encourages **Botrytis petal blight**. So, six of one, half dozen of the other, I don't think it matters that much. November is a good month to start gathering materials for a winter mulch. There are several materials you can use including oak leaves, pine bark, wood chips, sawdust, shredded pine needles and most any type of compost is good. We used to practice hilling mulch around the bushes for winter protection, and we used to order a dump truck load of pine bark for that purpose. The old saying was: "**Don't get caught with your mulch down**". But nine out of ten times it was totally unnecessary so we quit promoting this practice.

This is also a good time to start digging new beds for early spring planting. It's always good to allow the planting **recipe** time to age for a couple of months before planting new rose bushes. If you are digging new rose beds, remember that roses prefer full sun, about 7 hours a day, and preferably morning sun. The new bed should be away from the roots of other trees and shrubs so your roses won't have to compete for water or fertilizer. Get off on the right track and prepare a **RAISED** bed, at least 8 inches or more. Improve your drainage and the quality of your soil by adding **LOADS** of organic matter. It may be more costly and time consuming, but you'll thank yourself later.

If you receive bushes this fall and your planting holes are not ready, consider putting them up in 5 gallon pots using a good potting soil modified with peat moss and soil conditioner, a little lime and Osmocote. You could protect them on cold nights and the root system will be well developed by spring.

Be sure to attend our November meeting on Nov. 10. Bring a friend. Enjoy your November roses and share them with others. **Happy Thanksgiving and Happy Rose Growing in November.**