



Shenandoah Rose Society Shenandoah Rose Ramblings

*A Society of the Colonial District
Chartered by the American Rose Society*

*Volume 11 No. 3 April 2008
Serving the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia and beyond*



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April Meeting

The April meeting of the Shenandoah Rose Society will be held Sunday, April 13 at Christ Lutheran Church in Staunton. There will be a two part program. The first part by Charles Shaner on "Spring Rose Work" – and the second part by Al Minutolo on Dalia's. There will be a work day at Thornrose Cemetery Saturday, April 12, 8:30 A.M. Bring your favorite pruners, loppers, and something to dig grass from around the roses. There will be mulch to put down. We need to take a good inventory of the roses that are there. Many have been lost the past few years to RRD. We may get some replacements from Sherando Roses.

Pre-Spring Meeting

The Colonial District Pre-Spring meeting is now behind us. From the meeting, four people passed their CR exam, three from the Colonial District and one from the Deep South District. The fellowship, food and speakers were all excellent. Outside of a problem with the motel's PowerPoint projector and a few problems people had with rooms, it was an excellent weekend. The finances are not yet settled but we should come out in good shape. We had over 90 people in attendance.

This year's "Mac Award" for outstanding service to the district went to Pearl Martin from the Patrick Henry Rose Society.

Shenandoah Rose Society Website

www.shenandoahrosesociety.org

Yes, for those of you that did not know, the Shenandoah Rose Society does have a website. It has been active for about nine months and is gain-

ing in activity. The site is experiencing about 1,000 hits per month and that is increasing all the time. There are many things you can find on the site. If you missed a newsletter, it may be downloaded from the website. You will find articles on rose growing, a meeting schedule and information on District meetings.

We have sponsors that help defray the cost of the website and they have an ad on various pages. Please support these businesses as they are supporting us. We need a few more sponsors to fully cover the cost. If you know a business that would like to list an ad on the site the cost is \$20 for one year.

The Rambling Rosarian

By Charles Shaner

Spring is here and time for work in the garden. With a few warm days, my roses have been trying to grow for several weeks. With this new growth comes the "itch" to start pruning. You do not want to start this too early. Pruning encourages growth and we do not want to do that until after the threat of killing frost.

Feeding is another of the spring projects. If you feed organics you may apply that anytime. It takes organics about six weeks to kick in and the ground has to be warm enough to support biological activity to break them down. Chemical feeding is a different story. If you are giving them 10-10-10 fertilizer or an equivalent,



you will want to wait until the threat of a killing freeze is over. Chemical fertilizers of this type kick in instantly and only last a few weeks. They then need to be reapplied.

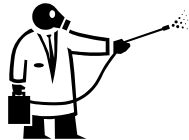


Watering is another item on the list. Usually in the spring we get ample rainfall to take care of the job – but not always. Keep a monitor on rainfall. If you do not get at least one inch of rain per week, you will need to water. You

can get rain gauges in a variety of prices and a simple one is all that is needed to give you an idea of how much rain you are getting in your area. Rainfall, especially during the growing season, can vary greatly from one neighborhood to another.

Check your mulch. A good 2” base of mulch will help to hold in moisture and control weeds. There are several mulches that are good to use. Pine bark seems to be very popular and is fairly inexpensive. Oak leaves work well and you can usually get a good supply free if you go get them. Pine straw works well and is readily available in many areas. A couple of people in our society have been experimenting with Cyprus mulch. I used some last year and it seemed to do well. I also found it to be a little cheaper than pine bark.

Then there is the problem of critter control. The first pest I usually see in the spring are aphids. If you are using rose cones for winter protection, you may want to check under them early. I no longer use rose cones because of wind problems but when I did, I had a good crop of aphids under them when it still too early to remove them.



After my roses have started to grow and are starting to produce buds, I have a big problem with deer. They love those young, tender buds and they are terrible pruners. Those ragged canes they leave are a horrible sight. I have found deer are

easy to discourage. They do not like the smell of fish. I thought it was the dried blood I was mixing in my rose foods. At the District meeting, I discovered it is not the dried blood but rather the fish meal

I blend in my rose food. You can also spray your roses with fish emulsion and keep them away. The spray will probably last until it rains while the fish meal will keep them away for about a month. It only takes about ¼ cup per plant to do the job.

Weed control is another problem I am always fighting. Mulch helps but some weeds still show their ugly face. The best and cheapest method, if you have the time, is the old fashioned “pulling”. The key is to get rid of the weed before they go to seed. I learned from my days of growing up on the farm that some weed seeds will lie in the ground for as much as 40 years before they germinate. Seven top turnips is one of them. I was very diligent in keeping the weeds pulled in my rose beds last year and I am not seeing as many this spring. OH YES! They are growing in April. If you want to spray for them, Round-Up® is the recommended spray. Just make sure you use a different sprayer than the one you use for insecticides. When you mix your sprays, do not use treated water



or water that has been softened. It is best to use rain water, water straight out of the well or go down to the creek and dip it out. Treated water will weaken or kill many of the chemicals in the sprays.

Spring Planting

By Charles Shaner

Most of us get new roses of some sort every spring. If we are not getting new varieties, we are replacing some that have been lost. For me, it is usually a combination of both. I don’t think I have ever had a winter go by that I didn’t have one or two bushes that did not make it.

In the Shenandoah Valley, from April first until May 31 is the prime time for planting and buying new roses. If you order, they usually come “bare root” and need to be attended to immediately. The potted varieties from garden centers can wait if given the proper care, and can be planted anytime.

When I receive a bare root rose, I like to pot it and give it some “TLC” for at least six weeks before putting it in the ground. This gives it a chance to reestablish a root structure before putting it in the ground. You may even want to let it get the first bloom cycle to see if it is one you really want.

The potting soil you use is just as important as the ground soil you are going to finally put it in. All the books tell you the perfect soil is 1/3 sand, 1/3 clay and 1/3 organics. This makes a nice loam that will drain well and not pack.

The soil here in the Valley has plenty of clay. We would really like to share that clay with the rest of the county. With the red clay we have, you do not want to mix much sand with it or you will end up with a brick. Organics and organic compost works well in breaking up red clay. Gypsum will not break up the clay we have east of the Mississippi.

In blending my own mixture, I use regular top soil, Miracle Gro® garden soil (very high in organics), Green Sand, and will add in some organic foods (alfalfa meal, fish meal, bone meal, cotton seed meal, milorganite, manure compost and dried blood). This gives me a good mix for planting. The organic foods will take about six weeks to break down and go to work. By that time the plant has re-established a root system that can take it up. You will want to “trim” the roots before potting. Cut off any broken roots and trim the long roots back to about 8 inches. This will encourage a new and stronger root structure to form.

I will use this same mixture when planting the bush in the ground. Make sure you dig a hole much larger than you really need and replace the soil with a good mix such as this potting soil. It is much better to dig a \$20 hole and put in a \$2 bush than it is to dig a \$2 hole and plant a \$20 bush. Go plenty deep; 18 inches should be good. The hole should be 18 to 24 inches wide. You should position your rose so the crown is about ground level to one inch above. At this level, you can pull mulch over the crown in the winter to protect it.

After you have set your rose and replaced the soil, it is time to water. The first watering should be a healthy one. You want to make sure the soil is moistened all the way down. After the first watering, keep a check on the soil for moisture the first couple of days and water as needed. You may follow the regular rules for watering after that.

If you are planting a potted rose from a nursery, the procedure for putting the rose in the ground is the same as for bare root. The root system is usually established when you purchase the plant so it can go in the ground anytime.

One thing you may want to check with a potted rose is the pH of the potting soil it is in. If

you are familiar with the nursery it came from, you may be confident with the soil it is in. If you are not familiar with the nursery, I would suggest you check the pH of the potting soil. Some years ago, when I did the project with the AARS on Willard Scott’s farm, the roses came from a nursery I was not familiar with. We used the potting soil they came in. A couple of weeks after planting, I checked the pH. It was low so I added lime. I waited a couple of weeks and checked it again. The pH went down instead of coming up. How could this be? I started checking around the rose bed and discovered the closer I got to the plant the lower the pH. I was given some of those plants for my use so I went home and checked them. I had the same results. The potting soil that was used was very low in pH and needed a large amount of lime to bring it up.

If unfamiliar with the nursery they come from, check the potting soil before planting. If the pH is extremely low I would suggest shaking all the soil off the roots and treating them as a bare root rose.

Box roses (the ones in a cardboard box where you plant box and all) should be treated as a bare root rose. Take them out of the box and discard the soil they are in. The idea is that the box will decompose in the ground. Doesn’t happen! The rose will become root bound before the box decomposes and may die or not grow very well.

The SRS Store

Our inventory in the SRS Store keeps growing. We have several items available at a good price to our members.

Mills Magic Rose Mix--20 lb. bag--member price \$15, non-member \$20; Contact Raymond Shaner 540-248-2301

Messenger--Mix for 1 gallon--member price \$2, non-member \$3; Contact Charles Shaner 540-294-2875

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