

## What About Spraying? by Kent Campbell

The time will soon be here when our rose plants come out of dormancy and show promise of a colorful and happy summer. Happy? **ONLY**, dear readers, if you feed and spray. When I began going to rose seminars over twenty years ago, pundits would proclaim avidly in their programs to “choose a day and spray every week. If you miss that day for some reason, spray the first day after that when you can!” There was no question except about what to spray with. Now, however, we are constantly hearing from an anti-spraying group among us. Their heart-felt message is simply concern for the environment.

Here are my thoughts about spraying and chemicals in general. First of all, these products come from our environment, not from outer space or from a vacuum. These elements are combined into pesticides of various types. The trick is to make a compound that when used will serve a certain purpose and then dissipate back into the original forms from which it was derived.

To oversee the laws that our government has enacted in this regard, and to create further policy as needed to protect our fragile environment, we are in the hands of our Environmental Protection Agency. Apparently somewhere in this massive bureaucracy there is a corner charged with approving garden chemicals. From where I sit, they appear to be doing a good job. Not only are pesticides subjected to intensive tests but also intricate requests before permission to market them is granted. Furthermore, they must undergo re-testing and new usage data studies every few years before they can lawfully continue to be marketed.

We probably all remember DDT and its demise some years ago. Take a moment here to recall with deep gratitude the book, **Silent Spring**, by Rachael Carson. She traced the movement of DDT from farmers' fields to the ground water to the eggs of fish eating birds and the dangerous eating of fresh-water fish by humans.

But the EPA is doing their job. Certain chemicals have been banned at second look. Crossword puzzle addicts know about ALAR, a chemical used in apple orchards. Apparently, its purpose was to make the apples shiny, to be attractive in the supermarket. Its side-effects must have been too dangerous in some way. So, it is banned.

Another argument regarding pesticides is their effects on “good bugs.” This, too, is being watched. **Sevin** is harmful to bees. As a gardener, I have always used 10% **Sevin** dust. This past year, it became unavailable and only 5% can be bought.

Meanwhile, to raise good trouble-free, attractive roses, do your spraying. Follow the directions of the chemicals you use. Seek advice if you have questions. Use alternative methods, such as an intense spray of water, covering blossoms with gauze or mesh envelopes, and so forth.

Above all, follow the rule for your own safety. The ARS needs your dues!

## What Good Rosarians Will be Doing in March *by Kent Campbell, CR*

March is an “in-between month.” It is unruly, neither winter nor spring it seems. The folk lore is “in like a lion, out like a lamb” or, heaven forbid, vice-versa. Also, March and early April usually provide short cold “snaps” to interrupt the gradual warming into spring. My grandma called them strawberry winter, black-berry, winter, and dogwood winter depending on what was in bloom.

Even though it is impractical to try to plan very far ahead, there are certain very important chores facing us. In this order, we must prune, feed, spray, and mulch. At the same time we should check the pH in our rose beds, and plant any new bushes we acquire.

Above, I mentioned that first comes pruning. This is the key to the entire summer, in regards to growing outstanding roses. The timing of spring pruning to have blossoms at their peak for a certain date is a very inexact science. It is, roughly, 45 to 55 days. Successful exhibitors in the mid-south say that at forsythia bloom or dogwood bloom is the "right" time to begin your pruning. My guess is that we are looking at the very end of March and/or early April to begin. March 29 is 55 days before our 2011 show, so do not become impatient and start too soon, even if in your pruning you have to cut out some new growth! If weather or other problems delay you, it is better to be a bit late than a little early!

Since spraying, feeding, and mulching will come in April, I will hold that discussion until the April issue of *Rosebuds*. Here, it is important to finish the subject of pruning.

In an effort to be in the peak of my first bloom cycle at show day, I begin cutting about 55 days prior to the show, depending on the weather!

What I am going to say about method is for Hybrid Teas, Grandifloras, miniatures and mini-floras, and floribundas. Shrubs, species roses, old garden type roses, climbers, and roses on fortuniana root stock require a slightly different approach, and will be discussed separately.

With the first group above, you should cut out all dead canes, all canes smaller than a pencil, and all canes of any size growing across other strong canes. This should open the bush, much like a deep bowl. Then cut the long, strong canes, a few inches at a time, down to white centers. As you cut, always cut at a slight angle, and to an outside bud. Do this to all canes on the bush and then re-trim the longest ones until all canes on the bush are the same height, even if you are cutting canes with white centers shorter. (Nature loves the strong and does nothing to assist the weak!) You should end up with a bush of only strong canes about 12 to 16 inches high. Small minis and mini-flora bushes, of course, should only be cut back to about half their height. But, they can go deeper into the canes if needed to get to white. Many rosarians maintain that it is important to seal the cut on top of the large canes with nail polish, Elmer's Glue, or orange shellac.

I usually prune in the order that it takes plants to mature to their bloom cycle. Floribundas require the most time to produce the sprays you seek; start with them. Next do the minis and mini-floras as their bloom cycles last the longest. Finally, do the H-Teas and Grandifloras, from dark-colored, heavy petaled ones first to the light colored ones with a smaller number of petals last.

Species roses such as Chinas, shrubs, and polyanthas require a light trim and shaping. If there are unruly or unproductive canes, they should be removed. Too severe a cut-back really slows these genres in development.

The same is true for bushes on fortuniana roots. They, however, seem to produce more dead wood than other bushes. I have two H-Teas on fortuniana that have produced massive, top heavy, bushy roses. The expert at our Nashville workshop last week told me to thin them out aggressively, as they are loaded with small canes and cut them back to about half their height. This I will do. Climbers and Old Garden Roses are very special cases. I have none of these varieties and hesitate to give advice about them. Essentially, I have read that one should wait until after the first bloom cycle to do any trimming of climbers, as they bloom on one year old wood and you will be able to tell which canes these are. Then cut out old non-productive canes.

I have been told that old garden type roses should be treated much the same as climbers. Cut out dead wood and trim back lightly.

Finally (about time you say!) this is an important task. It should be done at the proper time, in decent weather, and with a good, unhurried attitude. It is a key to everything else!

### **April and May in the Garden by Kent Campbell**

It appears that I have had a bit more winter-kill in my garden than usual. Simply put, we seem to have had more cold, cold weather than usual. Perhaps it is just my age, but the fact is, I am replacing ten of my 150 roses this year. (Then, there are seven more “don’t show – gotta go” being replaced also!)

Roses are becoming hard to get. Mine are coming from Rosemania, Whit Wells, and S&H in Florida.

In the garden, you should have cut back to white centers by the time you read this. I have also fed and mulched. I have put the recommended amount of Mills Magic Mix around each bush. I will not give them another dose of solid food until July. However, they will receive a dose of liquid food every two weeks until the show. I use Monte’s, but Miracle-Gro or Peters are also good. Be sure to select a carton that lists a good number of micro ingredients besides the big three. I also add a large kitchen spoon full of magnesium around each plant two or three times each summer, and plants that look especially puny early in the year get an extra handful of pure nitrogen.

Spraying is another chore that comes on us quickly. Aphids are the first insects to appear. They are very visible and are robbing the plant of vital nutrients. They also secrete a sugary substance on the plant which attracts ants and mites.

I suggest that at this time of the year, you spray as soon as the plants leaf out nicely. Once you see pests, especially blackspot, it’s too late to correct the damage already there. For your first spraying use a mixture of spreader-sticker (Indicate-5) an insecticide and a fungicide. Follow the directions carefully, BUT for the first spraying, cut all amounts in half! The young bushes are very susceptible to chemical burn! Then spray every week with full mixtures.

As soon as your roses bloom, the thrips will come. They will spoil a beautiful prize winning blossom in one hour. Keep a hand spray bottle near with Tal-Star mixed either in it or available for it. Walk through your garden as often as you can. I go for twice a day (morning and evening) and simply squeeze one mist of spray on each bud and each blossom. The thrips will leave! Keep doing this until you cut for the show!

#### **A Final Word**

We are a small society, but many people have worked very hard for many years to develop and maintain our reputation as a great place to come to workshops and shows. We are in a transition period right now and need maximum participation from everyone.

If you have been doing something for the show for a while and felt like it was more than others were doing, it probably was. That’s the way it is with volunteer organizations. If you love the hobby, the society, and going to other locals for shows, etc., please consider continuing to give of the expertise you have reaped over your years of service. Kathy and Mary Ann are doing a fantastic job, but they can’t do it all alone. We are hosts here; we get our pay-back as guests at Louisville, Nashville, Evansville, Knoxville, Memphis, and more!