

Sage Suggestions from Bob Sabin

Foremost Rose Exhibitor & Winner of Numerous Queen of Show Trophies

(Oct-20-2006)

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Bob Sabin shared some of his “secrets” at his presentation to members and guests at the SRS Annual Lecture/Luncheon in October 2006. Bob has won numerous awards and countless “Queen of Show” trophies and here are his tips to growing beautiful, exhibition roses.

- Must haves: Calibrated measuring spoons from Rosemania.com
- Measure accurately when using any fungicide or pesticide – less is more.
- Wear reusable Tyvek protective overalls w/hood,mask, goggles and chemically-resistant gloves.
- Test your soil with Cornell University’s Complete Soil Test Kit.
- Aim for a PH of 7 in your rose garden – to raise PH add Lime.
When preparing a new rose bed, plant light colors on the outside and dark colors on the inside to make the bed look larger. Do the reverse to make it look smaller. Plant roses 24 to 36 inches apart in beds four feet apart so you can easily work around them.
- Bob likes “bareroot roses” which can be ordered from Edmunds Roses and also Regan Roses.
- Soak bareroot roses for at least 24 hours in a trash can filled with water before planting.
- “Mud” roots in – fill hole with water and let it settle in the planting hole.
- Mound up a cone of soil around newly planted bush to protect from windburn and dehydration until it starts to leaf out.
- Irrigation – Bob uses “Dripworks” emitters by each plant.
- When pruning, use water-resistant glue instead of Elmer’s glue.
- Bob suggests using non-chemical fertilizers or soil amendments whenever possible, such as Vigor Cal with Boron from Agro-K (Tel # 800-328-2418)- spray on foliage once a week – use alone. Also try Symbex 4X which contains calcium, cobalt and zinc, from Rosemania.com. It activates microbes in the soil. Use every 2 months. Bob also praises Gypsum, calcium sulphate, rock phosphate, but NEVER USE BONE MEAL as it’s been linked to “mad cow disease”. “Healthy Start” or “Healthy Choice” is also a good amendment.
- Liquid Soluble Foliar Spray of choice is Peter’s Professional 15-30-15. Granular fertilizer common 5-10-5 (1/2 cup per plant) is a good fertilizer.
- Calicum Nitrate used in March gets the plants growing fast and strong. After the bud forms slow it down so the bud takes its time to open producing a large exhibition-type bloom.

- Sulphur – can be used as a fungicide – dust or spray for fungus, but don't use if temperature is over 85 degrees.
- Use LI700 as a surfactant spray every time you spray with fungicides or pesticides. It disperses the materials evenly to completely protect the leaf surface and in turn you use less chemicals.
- Try RESPONSE foliar and liquid feed.
- Liquid seaweed is a bio-stimulant.
- Before the rose show, use magnesium sulfate to green up foliage.
- Use wood chips to mulch your roses. They contain important trace elements and make good humus as they decompose.
- Check out Robert B. Martin, Jr.'s "Showing Good Roses"- Contains all you need to know to bring home the silver.
- Apply 0-0-22 before winter.
- To control rose midge, use the pyrethrin "Decathalon" from Hummerts or "Tempo".
- Some award winning roses: Hot Princess; Gemini; Dublin; Signature; Moonstone.
- Remember this hobby can border on insanity if you let it!