

## Spring Cultural Notes

By Jim Cunningham

Rosarians should be enjoying lush new growth on bushes now; be prepared for the onslaught of insects, and fungal diseases.



Fertilizing should commence as soon as new growth begins, a short time after pruning. This does not apply to newly planted roses. Heavy, clay soils take longer to warm up in spring than other lighter soils, fertilizer applied when the soil is very cold could cause delay in new growth. Good fertilizers such as **Sudden Impact for Roses** has the NPK analysis in bold letters printed on the bag; minor and trace elements are also present with this product.

Some soils are deficient in elements required for good plant growth and will benefit from a complete fertilizer. Soils high in organic matter such as compost and manures tend to have adequate trace elements present.

It is normal practice for me to scatter a clenched handful per bush around the drip line. The soil should be moist when applying fertilizer and well watered in following the application. Without ample water fertilizers are ineffective and will burn tender young feeding roots. Damage done by too much fertilizer and too little water is not uncommon. For fertilizers to give satisfactory results the soil pH should be close to adequate.

September and October are often windy months, this means vigorous new water shoots should be staked; strong lateral growth should also be protected. Simply push the stake into the soil at an angle if required and using a figure eight tie, secure the cane to the stake. I still use old nylon stocking for this purpose. If ever a water shoot is torn away from its point of origin new growth will never come from this point again.

Your fungal spray routine should commence as soon as sufficient new foliage arrives to make the treatment worthwhile. Fungal spores are very much alive in early spring. Insects will follow the rule of nature (bloom time). Inclement weather or the myth "never wet the foliage" can be ignored when you spray regularly for fungal disease.



Coverage is very important and the most regular rule broken. Spray material should get on all parts to be protected, leaves, canes, bud etc. Spray (and cover) what needs it; under foliage for mites, buds and blooms for **aphids** and thrips, succulent new growth for mildew. Good coverage takes time and observation. Depending on what you are targeting run off is not usually necessary.

Compatibility of sprays is sometimes an issue. Most materials are compatible. Generally speaking I prefer not to mix powders and liquids at one time. Some combinations work well together; the need to mix sprays to save time is understandable. When in doubt (and you have the time), use products separately.

You should own the best sprayer your budget can afford. It makes your job very easy and you are more likely to do it regularly. The sprayer I use is nearly silent, and rechargeable battery powered with a tank on wheels. There are some very good and

safe sprayers available. Spraying 180 bushes takes me less than an hour from start up to clean up. It is worth mentioning no fungicide is formulated to last longer than 14 days after spraying. This means that further applications are necessary for complete control.

After winter pruning we are confident that the maximum measure of protection has been applied when we use 'Lime Sulphur'. The term fungicide had not been invented when sulphur was just used on vineyards in France.

The story goes, a professor at the University of Bordeaux was passing by a vineyard when he noticed that the vines bordering his path looked much healthier than those at the university. Inquiries found that the owner had deliberately sprayed a mixture of sulphur and copper to discourage people from stealing his grapes. The professor returned to his laboratory and started formulating. The first fungicide was born- **BORDEAUX MIXTURE**. The professor was Alexis Millardet, the year was 1882.

Sulphur is a preventative that affects the leaf surface, making the leaf surface acidic on contact, the germination of fungal spores is prevented. Sulphur will not kill fungal spores, it prevents new germination. It also does a pretty good job on spider mites. Sulphur is not appreciated as it should be. If you are going to use any chemicals, read the directions carefully. Never spray foliage with sulphur when the temperature is above 20° C, as it will burn the foliage.

My five year trial period using sulphur is now complete. Two sprays in September at ten day intervals using reduced concentration levels (compared to winter) have been very rewarding. Nice clean green foliage and no sign of spider mites, gets the bushes into over-drive. Magnificent flush of blooms follow in October. It may be the world's oldest pesticide but it still delivers.

Rose shows are held in spring, come and get your noses into the roses. These shows are a spectacle for all of us to enjoy. Meet and greet is what it's all about, bring your friends and support the society. See you at show time.



Flemington Racecourse