

The American Rose Center
America's Rose Garden
Volunteer Newsletter

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Editor: Claude Graves—

"News You Can Use"

The newsletter for volunteers to the American Rose Center to keep you apprised of service opportunities

Contacts for Garden Volunteers for information at the American Rose Center are:

Frank Hover, Volunteer Coordinator

Email: ffhover38@bellsouth.net

Phone: 318 455 9330

Pam Bradley, Assistant Volunteer Coordinator

Email: pkbradley14@gmail.com

Phone: 318 564 6419

Please contact Pam for work assignments or other information,

**ARC regular Volunteer Day is Thursday of every week
Master Gardener scheduled service day is the third Thursday of each month.**

Master Gardener Volunteer Chair, Larry Williams—Larryw@broadmoor.tv 318-294-0642

Rambler Ramblings... Claude Graves

I have exciting news this month. In earlier issues of the Volunteer News Letter I have lamented the varieties of ramblers in the Anne Belovich we have lost over the years from our collection now at the American Rose Center. Some of the "Lost" have been found! This past week I received a shipment from Teddie Mower, Anne Belovich's Daughter-in law containing cuttings of 18 of the lost varieties. Teddie has been working hard to restore Anne's garden in Washington State. Anne was seriously ill the last few years of her life and unable to maintain her 350 Ramblers growing on pergolas, arbors, fences, tee pees and in the trees. Teddie and Anne's son Rick moved into Anne's home (which Anne and her husband Max had built, but that is another story) and now, with the help of local heritage rose groups have begun to clear out the excessive growth and find and identify the roses.

The 18 varieties sent last week are less than half of the 40 varieties of ramblers we are missing, however Teddie is confident that they will be able to find and identify many more next year. Ramblers only bloom for a few weeks each year so the time is short in which you can see the blooms, the problem is compounded by the fact that most all of the 350 varieties are blooming at almost the same time. Add to that the problem of the massive overgrown plants are all growing through each other. That pink bloom you are looking at, just which plant is it actually growing on? The cane bearing that bloom may be coming from a plant 20 feet behind the plant in front of you. As they get the roses cut back, and less congested, things will get easier to verify the rambler's identities in the future.

We will write more about Anne's Garden and the heroic efforts to recover it from the long period of neglect in future issues. What I want to discuss this month was brought to mind while I was sticking the cuttings Teddie sent.

Rooting Roses—Art or Science, Right Way or Wrong Way?



Rooting Shed at Chambersville
Roof prevented rain from soaking cuttings

I have been rooting roses for many years, initially on a very small scale, starting in 1994 when Pam and I became fascinated with heritage roses, those healthy, easy to grow treasures from the past. The meetings of the Dallas Area Historical Rose Society featured a cutting swap (and mostly just giving them away) at most every meeting. I was an engineer, not a horticulturist and had no idea how to root a rose. Everyone I asked had a different opinion on the "best" way to root a rose, no two methods were exactly the same. However I started rooting these roses and we soon had a collection of 40 or so Old Garden Roses in our garden.

What I learned was that there are many ways to root a rose. I tried many techniques, starting with the simple cutting in a paper cup covered with a sandwich bag, to eventually making a small plexiglass "greenhouse" and rooting in oasis seed starting plugs with no irrigation system, just opening the box daily and misting the cuttings. The tiny "greenhouse" worked well on a small scale for a dozen rose cuttings at a time and at home.

It was a different ball game when I had to start rooting 100 to 150 varieties of ramblers a year of the ramblers in the Anne Belovich Collection at Chambersville. To maintain the 1000 rambler backup nursery for the 317 varieties of ramblers in the gardens, I would have to have a better plan to root hundreds of cuttings.

The technique I had stumbled onto in my small plexiglass greenhouse that worked the best for me, was to stick small (1/8" diameter) cuttings, leave all the foliage on the cuttings, stick them in a VERY FAST DRAINING potting medium (mostly Perlite), keep them wet and very warm. The cuttings would root very fast, usually 2 to 3 weeks for most cultivars.



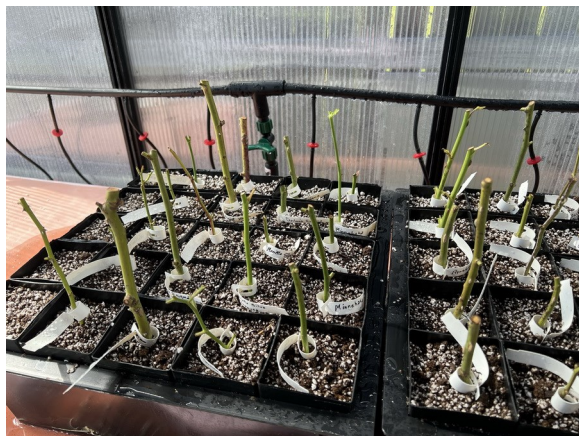
Trays of cuttings at Chambersville

I only worked at Chambersville two days a week so I need a automated system for me, maintain as near a constant environment as possible. We set up a small 12' x 20' area in one of the Greenhouses used to grow out small perennial shrubs for sale at Chambersville. The 17" trays of 25, 4" liners (pots) were placed on the concrete floor. A mist timer controlled an irrigation system which was in reality a shrub spray setup as typically used in landscapes. This "mist house" setup resembled the setup used by Mike Shoup at the Antique Rose Emporium for his commercial propagation of roses.

To keep the greenhouses at Chambersville from getting too hot in the summer, the plastic was removed leaving only the 20% shade cloth, this meant we needed to deal with the hot summer winds drying out the cuttings. To compensate, the mist timer was set to spray for two seconds every 4 minutes, this was sufficient to keep the cutting from drying out before they could root. This technique was used at Chambersville with very good results, especially when the cuttings were stuck in late June or early July, when it was unmerciful hot.

When I built my new greenhouse/mist house at home in Dallas to root these ramblers after Chambersville closed down, it was designed to utilize the same technique, hopefully in a more managed manner, still using a setup to root cutting very fast in very warm (hot) conditions.

In the preface to this article I mentioned the article was triggered by receiving cuttings from Teddie Mower, Ann Belovich's Daughter in Law. The cuttings Teddie sent were the more traditional cuttings as I had used in the early days of my rose propagation experiences. They were bigger in diameter and longer and stripped of all foliage. My experience was that these type cuttings require a much different technique than I was setup for. They usually rooted slower without the foliage, and were very susceptible to being in too wet of a soil and developing the dreaded "black foot" of death beginning at the soil surface and moving up the cutting.



Larger cuttings from Teddie

Unfortunately my mist setup was for keeping the cutting "soaking wet" for the almost 400 cuttings I had currently in

the mist house. The existing cutting however had been in the mist for about 3 weeks so a high percentage had already rooted to some extent. I was able to cut the mist timer way back to reduce the total amount of water dispensed and I put the new cuttings from Teddie on a heat mat to accelerate the rooting process.

The compromise seems to be working out, most of the existing cuttings stuck in early October have rooted well, 80 varieties have been potted now in 1 gallon pots and the remaining slower rooting varieties are fine with the reduced mist applications. Some of the new cuttings from Teddie

are starting to root after being stuck 30 days ago. It appears at this point in time, most of the cutting from Teddie will root, but the results can not really be determined until the cuttings are transplanted into permanent pots.

The bottom line is, there are many ways to root cuttings. Many gardeners over the years have developed methods that work well for them, but are not as successful for others that try them. Yes there are very technical and precise scientific methods of producing millions of cutting with almost 100% success used by the giant horticultural companies. But these require millions of dollars of investment in sophisticated equipment. For the average gardener the best way is to try a number of proven techniques and find what works for you, there is not really a right way or a wrong way to root a cutting. But generally a rooting hormone will help!



Small cuttings with foliage from ARC

Next Master Gardener Rambler Service Day
Thursday, November 16 @ 8:30 AM

Weather looks very nice: Temperature 56 at 8:30, partly cloudy, no wind.

I spent some time in the nurseries last week and noted that a few of the ramblers need to be retied or the ties adjusted due to growth.

We will have a short meeting at the start of the day for me to show you the problem

and explain what needs to be done.

There will not be a lot of new tying as the growth of the roses (and weeds) has slowed significantly due to the cooler weather. Many of the ramblers are going into dormancy for the winter.

There will be no Rambler Work Day in December!

HAVE A BLESSED CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR!