

Responsible, Organic, Simple & Earth-Friendly

The Good Earth Team



by Pamela
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It with great pleasure, as well as humility, that I and my Good Earth Committee members continue the fine work of Jack Schoultz and Paulette Mouchet to bring to the forum cutting edge information, as well as ancient knowledge, and common sense suggestions on the subject of growing roses without the use of chemicals. We will be bringing some profound and thought-provoking discussions to the table in the future. In this first article, I wish to introduce you to our new "team" of dedicated rose aficionados who are no strangers to the sustainable methods we will be discussing. Each one has years of experience to back up their words and opinions. Each has been able to grow roses without toxic poisons with great success validating that it is more possible than most believe.

We are not here to judge, but to enlighten and inform everyone about the exciting life of the soil microbes based on Mother Nature's design, the greatest intelligence on Earth, and how it all works together to give us the simplest and most practical systems enabling us to become co-creators with our land and gardens, employing a lifestyle in harmony with nature. What can we learn from her?

John Starnes

As an amateur rose hybridizer I began growing old roses on their



own roots and all organically in 1989, in my Denver gardens and those of my landscape clients in Denver and Tampa, usually with stellar results versus those I'd see else where, which were budded and routinely sprayed. I used my gardening columns in *The Rocky Mountain News*, *The St. Petersburg Times* and in several magazines to promote this "green" approach to rose growing, since most folks think of roses as being fussy and needing pesticides. But 'Probiotic Rose Growing' relies instead on introducing a mix of beneficial microbes and fungi to create a stable, complex ecology that crowds out pathogenic ones. It is much less expensive and less of a hassle. Tampa is in year eight of water crisis, and I've seen my beloved home state dry up since the late 60s. As a water conservationist and urban farmer growing much of my own food, with watering allowed just once weekly, I now grow nearly all my roses in buried home made water wise container gardens. This allows me the joy of growing roses while greatly reducing my use of precious water.

Peggy Martin

I have been gardening organically for over 40 years. I started out that way and have never deviated from those practices. It has worked beautifully! I was given my first two old garden roses in 1989 ('Peggy Martin

Rose' and a still unidentified 'Big Red China'-fragrant). (Want to look into getting the 'Big Red China' in commerce). I have over 20 years with the New Orleans Old Garden Rose Society as President, Vice President, and other officer positions. I am now Vice President again. I have been on the Board of Financial Advisers since its inception 10 years ago. I have also been the Old Garden Rose and Shrub Chairman for the Gulf District, in the ARS, for the last six years, and I am starting another three year term. Since 2007, I have been The Heritage Rose Foundation's first Vice President of Membership, and I am now also the Treasurer.



Peter E. Kukielski

People always ask me how I got started with roses... the absolute answer was from my grandmother. I am sure that one or more of you reading this article have similar stories. I remember my grandmother (and grandfather – "papa" as we called him) putting around their roses day in and day out. The first thing



my grandparents would do every morning was take a shovel and bury the banana peel that they just finished in and among the roses. Well, my grandparents

are long gone but their spirits are very strong in my gardening, and memories of their teachings of how to take care of the roses are still ever present. Today, I write these paragraphs after having a rose business in Atlanta for 10 years and curating the Peggy Rockefeller Rose Garden for the past seven growing seasons. The Atlanta segment was full of chemicals – always searching for the latest and greatest chemical force to keep the roses absolutely spotless and insect free for my clients. The New York segment has been a different chapter though. Having worked in the public arena for the last seven seasons has taught me to listen. I listen to the visitors – hundreds of thousands of them come

through my garden... almost each and every one saying, "I can't grow roses" or better yet "I don't want to spray." In New York, it has been interesting to work with local laws governing the use of chemicals. This change allowed for me to view the rose garden in a different way. Today, we have accomplished an 87 percent reduction in sprays from when I started... will next year be 100 percent?

I have learned that choosing the best plants and paying attention to the soil are key elements to success. Instead of paying attention to fertilizers and chemicals any more, I spend that time listening, paying attention to creating healthy soils and enjoying the benefits to the garden. I am thrilled to be working with the Good Earth Rose Committee to help encourage the dialogue of growing great roses.

Peggy Rockefeller Rose Garden Curator 2006-Present
 Chair of the new American Rose Trials for Sustainability (A.R.T.S.) to be launched in 2014
 Member of the National Earth-Kind team

Joan Goff

I am lucky. Lucky that I was born and raised in California, and have lived here all of my life. I wonder if I could continue sustainable garden practices if I had to contend with the Japanese Beetle.



Here in California we are lucky not to have this insect. Marin County (where I lived from 1977-2012) is located just beyond the Golden Gate Bridge and is one of the most beautiful counties in California. I have just moved in June of 2012 to Sonoma County, the next county north of Marin. Sonoma County is also beautiful and filled with vineyards. I feel closer to the land here and love the feeling of being back in the country. My parents were both gardeners; it was a hobby for both of them and they shared this passion very well. Mom grew the annuals from seed, Dad dug the big holes and did most of the fertilizing (with chemicals) and he ended up in his retirement years hybridizing camellias.

So I guess you could say that the gardening gene was always in me. Sustainable gardening is now big in Northern California and after attending Consulting Rosarian School in 2001, I decided I did not want to wear all the gear in order to use chemical sprays. So I stopped all chemicals and began new gardening practices. It actually has been pretty easy with roses. I tell people to begin by choosing roses with a high ARS garden rating. (Keep your ARS booklet in the car so you always have it with you.) Start with good garden soil by adding amendments that enhance the plants. Learn to prune out the center of the plant so that each plant has good air circulation and water only in the early morning. In this way, the plant has a good chance of producing a beautiful bloom. Good bugs outnumber the bad bugs in most gardens. Learn which are the good guys and know which ones are the bad guys so you can squish them with your fingers (gloves). Now I am in Sonoma, and my roses love the heat and sun which is so much stronger than in Mill Valley where they lived for 20 years. I dug up over 115 roses, put them in pots and moved all of them in June of 2012. They seem to be doing well. Some are still wondering what happened but all survived. I look forward to 2013 when they will have adjusted to their new pots and habitat. (I am currently renting so will keep them in pots until I find my next permanent home).

Pamela Greenewald

In the words of Masanobu Fukuoka, author of *The One Straw Revolution*, written in 1975, "Natural farming arises of itself when a unity exists between man and nature. It proceeds from the conviction that if the individual temporarily abandons human will and so allows himself to be guided by nature, nature responds by providing everything." This is exactly what I have found in the 40 + years I have been gardening organically. This has become my "bottom line". Science and observation will agree that for every problem there exists a natural and sustainable solution, for every pest there is a predator, and a balanced soil takes care of it's own. The less I do (interfere), the



healthier are my roses. Even my organic treatments such as neem oil and lime sulfur (which I rarely use any more) will ultimately reduce populations of our best friends, the good bacteria and fungi. It is important to realize first that 95 percent of all soil microorganisms are "Good Guys" who keep the bad guys from doing any damage. When we kill off the good guys, the bad guys, who come back first, are wide open to come and wreak havoc. In the NPK numbers game, any number over 10 kills microorganisms. Most synthetic fertilizers are concentrated in such high numbers (some as high as 40+), that they initiate the danger of burning roots, pushing roses to grow unnaturally fast and ultimately causing excess nitrogen to go unused, washing out of our soils into our rivers and eventually into our drinking cups.

I grow many varieties that are disease-free (teas, chinas and noisettes) and many that are not immune to blackspot fungus. It is a pleasure to visit each rose, say "Hello" and remove by hand all bad leaves, dieback and old blooms on a daily basis. I throw them into black nursery pots and then throw the contents into the garbage when full. This activity greatly reduces the spread of the blackspot spores and the rose immediately sets about making clean new leaves. I like to compare roses to humans. Have you observed how clean and beautiful a rose becomes when it is getting ready to bloom? Perfectly clean leaves! It is just like us when we primp and fuss and dress up to go out for the evening. Then when it is done with the bloom, it is just like us when we come home and throw our clothes off, kick back and relax. The rose does not look so hot after the bloom stage. Well? Are we not the same? My organically grown roses look just great 85 percent of the year. I can live with that. We cannot expect any rose to look perfect 100 percent of the year, whether we spray or not.

Pamela Greenewald, Chairwoman, owns Angel Gardens, on the Board of Directors for the Heritage Roses Group and President of the North Central Florida Heritage Roses Group. She is also a member of the ARS and the Heritage Rose Foundation.