

Talking Roses

with Ludwig

September '10

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"This is the divine moment when we can hold the fairest blossom of spring in one hand and the sweetest flowers of early summer in the other." – Patience Strong

In the rose garden with Ludwig

Rose growing is always full of surprises. Two weeks ago our lawn was white in the mornings and the roses that were pruned in early July, even though they had nicely sprouted new leaves, were standing still. We couldn't help wondering whether there would be blooms on the first weekend in October as advertised.

Now we are considering whether to start finger pruning and pinching to delay and spread out the flowering or not. That is how quickly the growth has advanced! Many rapidly stretching new shoots already show bud formation. The determining factor is the temperature. It went from winter to summer within days. The cold spell that we expect in mid September will slow down development so that flowering will be spot on by the 3rd October. The roses that were intentionally pruned much later are sprouting strongly.

Springtime is exciting for gardeners, especially after all the frosted branches are removed from the more tender shrubs, trees and perennials. I got involved in planting roses at the Alma School for physically challenged children. The garden had nice deep red soil but was overgrown with ivy and other odd plants and shrubs that were dried out and seemingly dead. After clearing the site, adding a thick layer of peanut shells, watering, digging and mixing, the soil came alive. The relaxing area, surrounded by 300 rose bushes, soon to be in bloom will create a welcoming space for the children where they can be stimulated by the beauty, colour and variety. However, the main point for writing this was, once again, the difference that peanut shells made to the soil.

The Banksia roses are in bloom, so we won't have to wait too long for the other roses to follow.

Annual Rose Bus Tour of Jo'burg Gardens - Saturday 16 October

It is that time of year again when we visit a selection of beautiful rose gardens in Johannesburg. This year's gardens range in size and style, showing that there are many ways to use roses. Again, there is a mix of designer gardens and those created by rose lovers with no formal training but with an eye for beauty.

The Parktown North garden was featured as an open garden in the Gardens of the Golden City two years ago. There are two gardens for the price of one. The original garden is an abundant mix of roses, perennials and shrubs in sumptuous borders that flow down terraces to the children's play area while the second garden is an extensive potager with a rose covered walkway as the central feature.

An old Waverly garden that was overgrown and out of date has been transformed into a rose paradise by landscaper Karen Gardelli. The homeowner's preference for warm, vibrant colours has resulted in a collection of roses that are a feast for the eye, even before you enter the garden. Roses in pots act as features and there is a lovely veggie garden on the side.

Another Gardelli garden could almost be described as the hanging gardens of Sandhurst. Karin has overcome the problem of a steep slope by building tiers of raised plant boxes that are filled with roses, annuals and shrubs. A tumbling waterfall softens the effect and huge containers of roses provide the finishing touches.

A small Bryanston garden echoes the challenges that many rose lovers face; how to fit roses into a fairly small space that also has to meet the requirements of the rest of the family. The result is one of colourful surprises around each corner.

Those who went on the tour three years ago will remember the large Linbro Park garden with the circular garden grouped according to colour. Many more roses have been added to this garden and we thought it worth revisiting.

For rose lovers there can be no more inspiring or enjoyable way to spend a Saturday morning.

The tour starts at Ludwig's Roses Egoli at 8:00am for 8:30am and concludes at 1:00pm when the buses return to Ludwig's Roses Egoli, for lunch.

Booking must be in advance.

Date: Saturday 16 October

Time: 8:00am for 8:30am at Ludwig's Roses Egoli, London Road, Linbro Park.

Cost: R200 per person payable in advance. This includes refreshments on the bus and a light lunch at Egoli. Numbers are limited to 60 people per bus.

To book contact: Petrisia de Beer at (012) 5440144 or email petrisia@ludwigsroses.co.za

Step by Step Rose Care for September:

The summer's heat is on its way and a layer of mulch for the purpose of insulating becomes a priority. A soil thermometer pushed through the mulch about 10cm deep into the soil during midday heat reads 18°C, compared to 28°C in soils without a mulch. The water in the soil heats up and that cannot be good for absorption by the roots.

Another interesting aspect is effect of the light reflection of white or whitish coloured mulch up into the bushes. A 10 year research project carried out in Germany showed that spreading out a white net under apple trees reflected 85% of the UV and PAR rays up to the plants giving the green apples a red sheen. Green grass grown as a ground cover reflected only 8% of the UV rays. Producers of cut roses in greenhouses know this too and place white plastic sheeting in the pathways.

The best natural "organic" mulch materials are pine needles and peanut shells. The light colour of the peanut shells makes them the preferred choice. Horse manure, thatch grass, lawn clippings mixed with leaves are also good.

However, the exciting part of rose growing is the manipulation that can be carried out on our hybrid tea and Antico Moderno® roses in September.

The descriptive word for it is **Finger Pruning** – pinching out the terminal tip of a developing shoot. The advantages of this practice are manifold. It spreads out the flowering period, creates more green leaves quickly, and encourages the roots to absorb a balanced diet for new growth and flower and seed development. Most importantly, it avoids a traumatic removal of too many leaves within days by cutting long stemmed blooms for home decoration. It also utilises blind shoots or any shoots that are too weak, bent or will not produce a good bloom and gives them a chance of a fresh start to do their thing.

An added advantage of finger pruning is the sprouting of the all important water or basal shoots. These rejuvenate the bush but also determine the height a rose will grow to in a season. Simply because it starts at the base and with much wider pipes (xylem) the water and nutrients take the path of less resistance. Water shoots grow very rapidly. However, because they are pumped full of water they are subject to wind breakage and the flowers on their terminal are in any case mostly out of proportion to the stems. It is vital to finger prune basals when they are just over knee height. If you catch them a bit late and they are at hip height rather cut them back with about three to five leaves.

Finger pruning is done with the fingers, simply snapping off the terminal tip.

The timing is important and depends very much on the stage of development of the new shoots. This differs from region to region. It also depends on when winter pruning was carried out, the position of the roses and on the variety itself. It is not a job one tackles with determination like winter pruning.

The new shoots should have at least 3 fully developed leaves with another two to three semi- or unfolded leaves above them. Even if you leave it a little late, it is still beneficial to carry out finger pruning when the buds can be felt or are pea size. The process often entails carrying it out over a week to ten days.

Although the principle of finger pruning is easy, individual inspection and decision making is required for each bush. About 25% of the new shoots on a bush should be finger pruned i.e. 3 out of 12, 4 out of 16, 5 out of 20 and 6 out of 24. It has no adverse repercussion to do more or less.

With a glance one will assess how many shoots are on a bush and proceed to nip or pinch out the tip of 3, 4, 5 or 6 shoots. Ideally, the shoots should be well distributed over the bush meaning that if two shoots are equal and next to each other pinch out the tip of one and so on. Any shoot that looks as if it is not going to produce a good bloom should be a candidate for finger pruning.

The amazing thing is that a week after finger pruning one will not easily see where the pinching has taken place. The leaves have turned and optimised the available space. The un-pinched shoots are now getting more sap from the roots and are developing strongly. In the meantime the pinched shoots, not being able to stretch immediately, are maturing with the upper, undeveloped leaves turning green and getting much bigger, photosynthesising and sending much needed food (sugars and carbohydrates) to the roots. It does not take long for them to sprout out of the upper two/three leaf axles and these will develop into quality blooms about three weeks after the un-pinched stems have flowered.

Bushes that are obviously not performing and have flower buds on short stems are best pinched rigorously. All these buds are /pinched snapped off with at least one leaf. Flower production takes a lot of energy from the roots without giving any back. By removing the tiny flower buds the process is immediately reversed and more food is pushed to the roots than is being absorbed. This encourages the formation of hair roots, which absorb more water and nutrients, pushing rich water into the bush and bringing about more shoots and leaves eventually resulting in strong basal shoots and a complete renewal of the bush.

Disbudding or the removal of side buds is carried out to improve the flower size and lasting quality when cut for the vase. By leaving all or some of the side buds the colour display on the bush will be enhanced and extended. These are before and after pictures of disbudding.

Because of the individuality of plants and varieties it is difficult to explain everything in writing and I strongly recommend that you attend one of the Spring Rose Care demonstrations I will be giving this month. See dates and venues below. If you would like to see me demonstrate finger pruning in

the comfort of your own home, we do also have DVD's available from our website
www.ludwigsroses.co.za

Watering is the most important aspect in September. The growth of a rose is very rapid and is absolutely determined by the water available at root level. Watering very well once a week is better than a daily dribble. A good watering every second or third day is the best. An automatic sprinkling system switched on every day is the optimum – only if it runs long enough for the water to get down to the roots. This applies especially in overgrown gardens with a lot of root competition. In our winter rainfall regions and especially in “green” KZN the rainfall is sparse so far and one can only hope for normal weather patterns. It seems that worldwide the weather is in an upheaval.

To boost the rapid growth in September requires extra nutrients, meaning an application of fertiliser. If you are on a monthly routine, applying the 30g or measuring cup of VIGOROSA is OK. With enough water available you may even be generous and add a little more for bigger leaves, longer stems, greater blooms. If you are not in this routine make sure to do so. Applying extra fertiliser in September is not just for an immediate boost of growth but also to keep the roots stimulated to absorb all the nutrients and not to go into a pre-programmed mode to slow down once the blooms are formed, which delays the next flowering flush.

Drenching with KOINOR or MERIT in early September keeps many of the insects that like to make a meal of the lush growth and free flowing sap, away for the whole season. Aphids, thrips and boll worm are the main culprits in September. This does not cover fungus diseases and regular fortnightly spraying with our Cocktail 1 or Rose Protector is essential for spotless roses.

Just a tip - because of the cold nights and abnormally warm days in August many bushes have formed flower buds at this very early stage. They will be short stemmed and may open with double malformed centres. It is best to pinch away these early buds with the upper two leaves.

Rose of the Month LEMON PROFUSION KORhelsea(N)

This super performer was in full bloom in August in Hillcrest, KZN and could not be overlooked. Indeed it does superbly well in that sometimes difficult “rose climate”. Obviously it is a maintenance free, ever flowering border plant everywhere. It does very well in pots too.

News from our rose centres

Ludwig’s Rose Farm north of Pretoria on the N1 motorway: I expect to see a lot of colour from our roses by mid September – not just from the Namaqualand daisies, Poppies and Pansies!
The Spring Rose Care and Finger Pruning demonstration will be held on Saturday 4th September at 10h30 and on Sunday 12 September at 10h30.

CLUB & PENSIONER’S INVITATION

We invite all pensioners and clubs to come and enjoy a day at Ludwig’s Rose Farm!
You can stroll through the rose pathways or enjoy a leisurely tractor trailer ride through the rose fields.

We are offering a package for only R55 p/p during September’s weekdays!

This includes:

- Tractor Ride between the rose fields
- Tour and entrance to the enclosed, tropical butterfly garden
- Tea or Coffee served with a farm baked scone, cheddar, cream, butter and rose petal jam!

LEARN MORE ABOUT BUTTERFLIES!

The rose farm is ideal for kids parties or school / home schooling groups. The butterfly garden, playground and restaurant will gladly assist in setting up an event according to your requirements and budget.

Booking is essential. Please phone Spiced Coffee Restaurant at 012 5440144 or e-mail spicedcoffee@ludwigsroses.co.za.

Ludwig's SOLEIL Cut Roses in Lynnwood Road, Pretoria:

The roses already look superb and the cut flower stems are really stretching up to the desired length. Soon they will be ready for picking. The Rose Rendezvous has a warm, colourful feel, still showing off with lots of primulas, pansies and poppies.

The Spring Rose Care demo at Soleil will be held on Saturday 4th September at 14h00.

All the Rose Care products and accessories are in stock as well as the full range of garden rose plants.

Ludwig's Roses EGOLI in Linbro Park, JHB: I was amazed to see that the roses had developed almost further in the cooler JHB climate than what they have here North of Pretoria. The purplish, reddish rose leaves are an attraction on their own.

The Spring Rose Care Demonstrations will be on Sunday 5th September at 10h30 and on Saturday 11th September at 10h30.

Ludwig's Roses Winelands near Stellenbosch: Not enough rain has been received to fill the dams to capacity, however the roses are happy to go to sleep with dry leaves most evenings.

The Spring Rose Care Demonstrations will be held on Saturday 18th September at 10h30 and on Sunday 19th September at 10h30.

Ludwig's STAR Roses in Hillcrest, KZN: I was there for the Spring Rose Care demonstration on 21 and 22 August. I was pleased that the light pruning or rather just cleaning up of the plants in July worked well and many of the roses had already flowered in August. However, they are getting a bit lengthy for saleability and we started cutting back the leaved stems by half. The roses in the Heritage Market were cut back in May for the purpose of neatness and flowered well in July. We then cleaned them up by removing much of the twiggy inside growth and obvious old wood, but left leafy tips and the main branches. They are bound to sprout well lower down on these stems and the stems can then safely be cut back above such new shoots within a month.

I noticed that, in the region, lack of rain since early March has placed stress on the roses. I suspect it is because many gardeners are just not used to such prolonged non rainy periods. Also, the lush green huge shrubs and trees that grow in every garden, are grabbing more and more water with their vast root systems. Again the roses are happy with the reduced humidity and dry foliage, but a little extra watering will go a long way.

Magda reports that rain has fallen in Hillcrest this morning, so hopefully it means that the weather will return to normal.

Rose greetings,

Ludwig