

# Ricky's Gardening Tips and Tricks

## and Home Horticulture

### Late June 2022 Issue

Written and compiled by Ricky D. Kemery, Allen County Extension Educator Retired, phone: 260 - 431- 6893

**Ricky's Gardening Tips and Tricks and Home Horticulture** is an online newsletter designed to provide citizens of Allen County and northeastern Indiana with up-to-date information about Horticulture and home issues, written in a lighthearted style! To subscribe, send an email to [kemeryr7@frontier.com](mailto:kemeryr7@frontier.com).

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## Using Roses in Landscapes – The New Vs. Old

adapted and condensed from

Wikipedia, Illinois Extension, University of Missouri, and the Chicago Botanic Garden

A lot has changed with roses over the years. Gardeners have moved from using fancy roses that required a lot of care to newer tougher roses designed for little maintenance.

Fossil records show rose to be one of the most ancient of flowers. According to the University of Missouri, roses probably originated in Central Asia and China but spread and grew wild over nearly the entire northern hemisphere - especially northern Europe into northern Africa and Asia minor. The European roses have only one season of bloom per year, while the Orientals repeat bloom - but are less cold hardy than the roses from Europe and damasks from northern Africa .



*Rosa gallica*

Alexander the Great is credited by some with having introduced rose into Europe while others attribute the latter to knights returning from the Crusades of 12th and 13th century.

During the Roman period, roses were used as confetti at celebrations, for medicinal purposes, and as a source of perfume. Roman nobility established large public rose gardens in the south of Rome.

Legend has it that during the Roman Empire there was an incredibly beautiful maiden named Rhodanthe. Her beauty drew many suitors who pursued her relentlessly. Exhausted by their pursuit, Rhodanthe was forced to take refuge in the temple of her friend Diana. Unfortunately, Diana was of a jealous nature and when the suitors broke down her temple gates to get near the beloved Rhodanthe, she became furious. Enraged, Diana turned Rhodanthe into a rose and her suitors into thorns.

In Greek mythology, Aphrodite, Goddess of Love, is said to have created the rose which arose from her tears and the blood of her lover Adonis. In Ancient Greek mythology, Aphrodite's (called Venus by the Romans) son Cupid accidentally shot arrows into a rose garden. It was believed to be the sting of the arrows that caused the roses to grow thorns. When Venus walked through the garden and pricked her foot on a thorn, it was the droplets of her blood which turned the roses red. Venus needed to wear shoes.

Many modern roses were developed from *Rosa gallica* (pictured above), which is a native of central and southern Europe and western Asia. Called the "Apothecary's Rose", *R. gallica* was grown in the Middle Ages in monasteries for its alleged medicinal properties and became famous in English history as the Red Rose of Lancaster. Examples include 'Cardinal de Richelieu', 'Charles de Mills', and 'Rosa Mundi'. One can still purchase *gallica* roses from some mail order sources such as "Roses of Today and Yesteryear".

To bring order to the wild world of roses, the American Rose Society has classified all roses into two major categories: old garden roses (sometimes called antique or heirloom roses) and modern roses. The old roses are those that were cultivated in distinct classes prior to 1867, and the modern roses are those that followed. The year 1867 is an important one in rose history, since it marks the debut of the **hybrid tea rose** "La France"- a hybrid of two Asian varieties.

**Hybrid teas** are only one of the modern rose types. In this contemporary class are the floribundas, polyanthas, grandifloras, climbers, and shrubs. In our area, these modern roses need the spraying, coddling, fertilizing, and fussing that are the hallmarks of the hybrid teas and other modern roses.



**Polyantha roses:** The name of this class literally means "many-flowered", from the Greek "poly" ("many") and "anthos" ("flower"). Originally derived from crosses between two East Asian species, *Rosa chinensis* and *Rosa multiflora*, polyanthas (with smaller flower clusters) first appeared in France in the late 19th century alongside the hybrid teas. 'Cecile Brunner' is still offered today.

**Floribunda roses** are crosses between the hybrid tea rose and the polyantha rose. The floribunda rose has all the beauty of the hybrid tea rose, but because it has such good disease resistance, it is a much easier lower maintenance rose than hybrid teas. Examples include 'Anne Harkness', 'George Burns', 'Iceberg', and 'Gene Boerner'.

**Grandifloras:** Latin for "large-flowered", are the class of roses created in the middle of the 20th century as back crosses of hybrid teas and floribundas that fit neither category. 'Queen Elizabeth', which was introduced in 1954 is a well-known grandiflora. Grandiflora roses are typically larger than both hybrid teas and floribundas and produce flowers that resemble those of hybrid teas and are borne in small clusters of three to five, similar to floribundas. Grandifloras were somewhat popular from circa 1954 into the 1980s, but today they are much less popular than both hybrid teas and floribundas

**David Austin Roses:** David Austin of Shropshire, England hybridized Old Garden Roses with modern hybrid teas and floribundas. The idea was to create a new group of shrub roses that featured blooms with old-fashioned shapes and fragrances, evocative of classic Gallica, Alba and Damask roses, but with modern repeat-blooming characteristics and the modern expanded color range as well. Unfortunately, Austin roses turned out to be susceptible to the same disease problems that plague modern hybrid teas and floribundas, and many are not hardy north of USDA Zone 5. Examples: 'Charles Austin', 'Graham Thomas', 'Mary Rose', 'Tamora', 'Wife of Bath'.

In recent times, traditional hybrid tea, grandiflora, and floribunda rose varieties fell out of favor with many gardeners and landscapers interested in roses less susceptible to diseases and insects and winter damage. So-called "landscape" roses have thus been developed to fill the consumer desire for a garden rose that offers color, form, and fragrance, but is also low maintenance and easy to care for. A huge difference between the modern roses and landscape roses is that landscape roses are grown on their own roots - instead of being grafted. Grafted roses are grown on rootstocks of very vigorous varieties such as *Rosa multiflora*, which can overtake the top portions if suckers are allowed to develop. In addition, many grafted varieties still need winter protection in colder regions such as ours. Landscape roses do not need winter protection in our area, and little-if any-pruning.

Principal parties involved in the breeding of new landscape roses varieties include Werner Noak (Germany), Meidiland Roses (France), Boot & Co. (Netherlands), and William Radler (US).

**Meidiland Roses:** I first trialed these at the Purdue Horticulture Gardens (circa 1990) by planting them in the worst area I could think of. Two years later, I had a three-foot in height hedge covered with flowers. They are tough.



**Oso Easy Roses:** These are newer, released by Proven Winners – and come in various heights and colors. They look very promising. These roses were developed by noted rose breeder Alain Meilland of France. Each year, between April and the end of July, 20,000 to 30,000 flowers are crossed manually by Meilland to give birth to potential new garden and cut roses, that are then tested and selected all across the world. It requires between 8 and 10 years to develop new garden roses

**Drift Roses:** Also newer, these promise the same easy care as other landscape/shrub roses. Also developed by rose-breeder Alain Meilland, from the famous rose-growing family of Meilland. They produced the world's most famous rose, 'Peace', during the German occupation of France in WWII.

**Simplicity Roses** are developed by Jackson and Perkins – a famous company famous for roses.

**Easy Elegance Roses** are offered by Nature Hills nursery.

There are plenty of other shrub roses - most notably "Bonica" and "Carefree Wonder" rose developed in the 1990's. Many floribunda roses and ramblers are still developed as shrub roses and are in the trades. One could spend a lifetime (and a lot of money) planting landscape roses.

## Mystery of the Disappearing Oranges

I have two oriole feeders in my backyard. I have gone to great lengths to attract them. I just think Orioles are cool. I purchased 2 feeders from Amazon (where else?). One is placed on a tall stake near my window, and the other hangs from a limb in an oak tree. These feeders have areas to place oranges, nectar, and grape jelly to keep the orioles happy. The orioles are in fact quite fond and protective of the jelly in particular.

Recently oranges have disappeared from the feeder in the tree, and lately the entire feeder has been pulled to the ground – a feat since the feeder is a ways above ground level. I first thought that the squirrel couple who have a nest in the tree were pilfering the oranges, but then read that squirrels don't really like oranges. Hmm. a mystery that Nancy Drew would have trouble solving.

The solution was to place a Yi camera close by to monitor the feeder. A wildlife camera which - unlike the Yi is waterproof- would have also worked. I waited until a night when the chance of rain was near zero to set up the camera. Yi cameras are fairly inexpensive and can be paired with my phone. My Yi will shoot continuously and note when anything moves nearby. It is also handy to monitor bird nests for a live feed and to monitor the front door – much like a ring alarm so I can see any unwelcome intruders who want to sell me special deals on utilities or roof and tree work. One can also talk and listen through the camera – which can be amusing when animals (or people) are present. One can imagine the fun when someone comes to the door to sell a product.

*Salesperson comes to door and rings doorbell. "Hello", a voice from the camera bellows. "Hello, I am Greg from gutter sales Inc., and... Camera.. Helloooo... Salesperson... I am... Camera "Hellooooooooooooooooooooo (sounding like the intro announcer for the Steven Colbert show)"..... Salesperson.. Uh,, Camera*

**Camera:** recorded sound of toilet flushing followed by Frank Sinatra singing “Where are the Clowns?” by Judy Collins...

**Bokashi:**



**Here's the Story:** (*keep in mind I didn't make this up*) One day, Dr. Higa was working in his lab and accidentally spilled microorganisms

Based off of this accidental discovery, Dr. Higa experimented throughout the years to discover the optimal combination of microorganisms and finally create the first use of EM Technology - EM 1- which is a liquid bacterial product that is made up of three main microorganisms: Yeast, Photosynthetic Bacteria, and Lactic Acid Bacteria. Dr Higa also was bitten by a radioactive spider and was able to spin webs and climb skyscrapers... **Note:** Lactic acid is not a bacteria or a micro-organism.

EM® Bokashi is enriched with Effective Microorganisms and is like a health fix for your garden. According to the website, each handful is teeming with plant friendly effective microbes and can be added directly to your soil or growing containers or used to kickstart healthy organic matter breakdown in your outdoor or kitchen compost bin.



In bokashi “composting”, kitchen and household waste are placed in an airtight container, such as a 5-gallon (18 L.) bucket or large trash can with a lid. A layer of waste is added, then the bokashi mix, then another layer of waste and more bokashi mix and so on until the container is filled. The microorganisms, selected by Dr. Higa, are the catalyst which begins the fermenting process to break down organic waste.



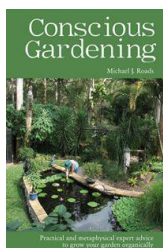
When the airtight bin is filled, you simply give it two weeks to complete the fermenting process, then bury the fermented compost directly in the garden or flower bed, where it begins its second step of quickly decomposing in the soil with the aid of soil microbes. **Note :** What? A second step?

I have been watching old Iron Chef episodes lately (the original series from Japan). The bokashi above looks like a Michiba-san food creation made from fish innards, kelp, and eel.

Bokashi pre-compost is essentially pickled food scraps. One of the most common ways to finish Bokashi pre-compost is to bury it in an existing garden or around the base of a tree. Because Bokashi

pre-compost is very acidic, it is important to bury your pickled food scraps in a spot that is at least 9 to 12 inches away from any existing plant roots to avoid killing your plants. After a couple of weeks, the Bokashi pre-compost will neutralize and begin to provide nutrients to the soil.

**Ricky’s Comments:** So, is Bokashi a compost? A pickled pre-compost? A fermented pickle-like product similar in appearance to a Mind Flayer? This company is like Jerry Baker on steroids. Fortunately, most people viewing this Facebook thread were very suspicious of the company’s claims. However, there were a fair share of testimonials from folks who swear that the product is the best thing since butter on bread.



So essentially, Bokashi is a fermented or pickled food waste - not “compost”- that one has to then bury in a garden carefully (or it could kill your plants) so it can then break down into helpful nutrients for plant growth. I can do the same thing simply by burying food waste or plant trimmings in a garden without the expense and hassle. A metaphysic guru would claim that all one has to do is to think that the plant will do well – with the help of special crystals – and it will. Just read the book pictured to left.

I wrote this article to illustrate to people the dangers and complexity of the Internet and social media that is an extension of snake oil salespeople like Jerry Baker and others who use media to make money.

There is always a bit of truth to claims used to sell or use products by so called experts. It is true that micro-organisms in soil are good, and that certain fungal organisms in the soil can benefit plant growth. I know this because I studied those micro - organisms at Purdue. Improving plant health does indeed help with disease and insect resistance. These are all side benefits off adding any organic matter- pickled or not – to a garden.

I have recently found two other products advertised in Facebook gardener thread that also make fantastic claims based on no credible research. The bottom line is buyer beware - especially with Facebook ads and infiltrated threads.

As always, when it comes to the Internet and social media, opinions and products are as numerous as grains of sand. Amazon of course sells everything Bokashi, and this very long website also offers many Bokashi products at what seems to me are very high prices

[https://store.bokashicycle.com/?msclkid=c456da2b87c81d5e6561b898f65a862a&utm\\_source=bing&utm\\_medium=cpc&utm\\_campaign=\\*\\*LP%20Search%20-%20Branded%20New&utm\\_term=Bokashi&utm\\_content=Bokashi](https://store.bokashicycle.com/?msclkid=c456da2b87c81d5e6561b898f65a862a&utm_source=bing&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=**LP%20Search%20-%20Branded%20New&utm_term=Bokashi&utm_content=Bokashi)



## Mosquitoes

Compiled from material by Anne Marie Helmenstine, Ph.D., Web MD.

Mosquitoes bite, suck your blood, and leave you with itchy bumps and possibly diseases such as West Nile virus, Zika virus, Chikungunya virus, and dengue.

Mosquito-killing products bring in the big bucks, so it should come as no surprise that there is a wealth of misinformation out there. Before you get sucked into buying a product that simply won't work, get educated about what does and does not kill these blood-sucking pests.

Eradicating mosquitoes is virtually impossible, so the best we can do is to try to control them and reduce exposure.

Effective ways to kill mosquitoes include removing breeding grounds, encouraging predators, applying an agent containing BTI or IGR, and using traps.

Insect repellents and bug zappers (and amazingly Bokashi) don't kill mosquitoes.

Citronella candles or plants may deter mosquitoes from entering a small, enclosed area, they don't really work in a wide open space (like your back yard). It's the smoke from citronella candles that repels mosquitoes, not the compound. The carbon dioxide from combustion actually attracts them.

Many species of mosquitoes required standing water to breed, so one of the most effective methods of controlling them is to remove open containers and repair leaks. Dumping containers of standing water kills the larvae living in them before they get a chance to mature. However, some species don't even need standing water to reproduce! The *Aedes* species, responsible for transmitting Zika and dengue, lays eggs out of water. These eggs remain viable for months, ready to hatch when sufficient water becomes available.

### Choosing a Mosquito Repellent

Mosquitoes are attracted to people thanks to things like strong smells (such as scented soaps, food, or skin odor), dark or bold-colored clothing, and warm body temperature.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) says mosquito repellents that contain DEET or picaridin are safe for adults and children over the age of 2 months, when used correctly. The issue is that many folks distrust anything the feds have to say and are looking for more “natural” controls

Some natural repellents you might want to consider include:

**Oil of lemon eucalyptus (OLE).** This is a natural, plant-based oil. It works as well at preventing mosquito bites as products that contain lower concentrations (6.65%) of DEET. PMD is a version of oil of lemon eucalyptus that is produced in a lab. Repellents containing OLE or PMD may provide up to 2 hours of protection. If you decide to try OLE, make sure you buy the insect repellent version and not “pure” oil of lemon eucalyptus (essential oil). They aren't the same. The safety and effectiveness of the essential oil as an insect repellent is not clear. Also, OLE should not be used on children under age 3.

**Geraniol** (found in citronella, lemongrass, and rose oil). Studies have shown that repellents containing this natural chemical can help keep mosquitoes at bay for a short while, but they don't work as long or as well as other types of repellents.

**Catnip oil.** This insect repellent is derived from the *Nepeta cataria* plant. It may offer mosquito protection for 7 hours, according to the EPA.

**Cinnamon oil.** This has been shown to help make you a bit less attractive to mosquitoes for up to an hour and a half, which is longer than many other natural oil repellants.

**IR3535.** This is also known as Merck 3535. It is an active ingredient in some insect repellents. IR3535 was used for years in Europe before being registered by the EPA. It may offer up to 2 hours of mosquito protection. IR3535 is considered "natural" because it is structurally related to a naturally occurring chemical.

**2-undecanone.** This is derived from the tomato plant. It may offer 4½ hours of protection from mosquitoes. It can be found in some insect repellents.

**Nootkatone.** Perhaps the most promising of natural repellants, this oil is made from grapefruit skin and cedar trees has been approved by the EPA as an ingredient in insecticides. It has been found to repel and kill many biting insects, including mosquitoes. Studies show it can give several hours of protection.

Many other natural ingredients are currently being studied as mosquito repellent. These include:

Fennel – Thyme - Clove oil - Celery extract - Neem oil More studies are needed to verify their safety and efficacy.



**Bacillus thuringiensis** (sold as Mosquito Dunks in most hardware stores) infects larval mosquitoes and damages their digestive system so they can't eat. It is not effective against adults. It is very effective and safe to use in any area of standing water, including birdbaths.

Because mosquitoes are not strong fliers, it's also easy to suck them onto a screen or into a separate trap using a fan. Mosquitoes caught using a fan die from dehydration. Screen-traps may be made at home by fastening window screening fabric over the back of a fan. Some commercial variations of this process are available online.

I have recently seen web sites and “experts” who discuss how **cedar mulch** can control or eliminate mosquitoes in a landscape. This year I have used cedar mulch extensively in my landscape. I like the smell and appearance of cedar mulch, and it lasts for a long time. It is true that some products containing cedar extracts can control insects. Anyway, I can state with absolute certainty that mosquitoes in my backyard don't care a whit about cedar mulch, and attack in droves as dusk approaches.

## Summer Lawn Issues

Summer lawn diseases are generally more severe than lawn issues in the spring. One can try to control these diseases yourself, but sometimes using a turf professional is more effective.



**Brown/Summer Patch** occurs most in highly managed lawns or lawns of turf type tall fescue. Brown patch thrives when it is hot and humid. Prolonged wetness from dew, rain, nighttime or evening watering, or poor drainage—or any other activity that keeps grass blades wet during weather in which temperatures are above 80 degrees F during the day and 65 degrees F at night—create ideal conditions for developing this serious fungal disease. In addition, grass that has been over-

stimulated with nitrogen fertilizer just before or during hot, humid weather tends to be more susceptible to brown patch. A distinguishing feature of brown patch on is the presence of dark purplish rings around the

periphery of circular patches. Smoke rings are more pronounced in the early morning hours, usually fading by midday. In the early morning on dew-covered turf, white mycelium of the causal fungus can often be seen on and between grass leaves in the patch.



**Pythium Blight** can absolutely decimate lawns very quickly. Pythium blight first appears as small, sunken, circular patches up to 1 foot in diameter during hot, humid weather. Leaves within affected areas are matted, orange or dark gray in color, and greasy in appearance. Gray, cottony mycelium may be seen in the infected areas when the leaves are wet, or humidity is high. The disease spreads rapidly along

drainage patterns and can be spread by equipment. Pythium can cause widespread damage to a turf stand very quickly when conditions are favorable for development. Consult a turf professional for help if you suspect pythium.



## Knockout Roses

The most popular rose in America, known as ‘**KnockOut**,’ was created by William Radler in his basement, just outside Milwaukee, Wisconsin. For fifteen years, Radler labored alone, patiently nurturing thousands of seedlings under grow lights until the desired result was achieved. Released to the general public seventeen years ago, 90 million ‘KnockOut’ roses have since been planted across the country.

The combined presence of five characteristics has made ‘KnockOut’ roses such a success: disease resistance (no black spot or powdery mildew), drought tolerance, cold tolerance, self-cleaning (no dead heading required), and continuous bloom. Some people complain that KnockOuts have no fragrance and do not last as long in a vase as most rose varieties do. The first ‘KnockOut’ rose is said to have been created by crossing seedlings of ‘Carefree Beauty’ and ‘Razzle Dazzle’ varieties. Despite the heavy promotion – KnockOut roses turned out to be not as cold hardy as claimed. We have experienced a couple of years where Knockouts have died back after an especially cold winter, or when heavy frosts or freezes occurred in late spring. The plants still survived, but folks had to prune away the dead stuff.



**Rose Rosette Disease:** Rose Rosette a viral disease– spread by tiny mites - which causes the foliage to become extremely thorny. In our area, it appears that modern roses and shrub roses Knockout and Nearly Wild roses can be susceptible. A common symptom of RRD is a brush-like cluster of shoots or branches that originate at or near the same point, a symptom that is called a witches’ broom or rosette. Eventually the entire plant is affected. The plants must be removed and destroyed. In recent years, this disease problem appears to be a growing issue as more and more cultivated roses are used in landscapes. It is also more common where Rosa Multiflora (a host for the disease) is more common. At this time, all roses are believed to be susceptible on some level to the disease.



# Storm Damage

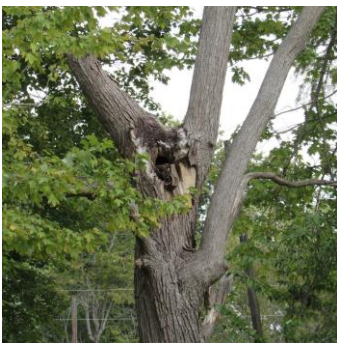
My home missed most of the drama and damage associated with the recent derecho. I know several folks who live in the southwestern portion of Fort Wayne that experienced severe damage from downed trees. When I was a student at Purdue, a severe ice storm left my family without power for a week, and downed trees were everywhere. I was a board member at Allen County parks for over a decade and know how devastating storm damage can be at facilities such as Fox Island.



We all love trees, but often ignore the potential issues of having large trees close to the house or lining neighborhood streets next to power lines. I remember visiting neighborhoods where many large silver maples had been planted years ago. Silver maples are very weak wooded and are often the first to fall in severe weather. I would tell folks to at least have the trees pruned by a professional arborist to remove weak or suspicious branches and to thin the trees to reduce breakage in storms.

This year, it seems like many oak trees also fell in the storm based on the footage I saw. Large old oak trees in an urban setting can be vulnerable to storm damage. As the trees age, they become more susceptible to insect and diseases that are not so visible to the naked eye. In particular I noticed pictures of fallen oak trees with a blackish material in the interior of the tree. It is certainly possible that these trees were infected with a disease called armillaria root rot, which spreads to the tree from the roots and causes rot over time.

Many older trees are hollow-which is natural as the heartwood disappears in trees over time. But sometimes a hollow tree is susceptible to insects like carpenter ants who enter through wounds in the tree and excavate wood on the interior – weakening the tree.



Sometimes, improper pruning can result in damage and tree rot because the original wound never healed properly. Poor branching habits developed at an early age can cause a tree to have double trunks or poor branch angles that collect water and allow rot to occur. Improper planting or volcano mulching, or planting flowers around the base of a tree that require extensive watering can also rot the base of trees making them more vulnerable to storm damage.

Construction around sensitive trees such as oaks and hard maples weakens the root systems and makes them more vulnerable to damage from storms.

Sometimes the wind speed is so high that trees fall no matter what species or condition the tree is.

## **Here are a few tips to help prevent storm damage to (and from) trees.**

I have always said that it is a good idea to plant trees that become large over time at least 20-30 feet or more away from the house.

Trees should never be planted anywhere near power lines.

Large trees should be pruned by a professional arborist at least every 5-10 years to thin the trees of excessive interior growth, fix poor branching habits, and to check for any disease or insect issues.

Never have trees “topped” – the resulting growth is weaker and more prone to storm damage.

Cordon off the drip line of a tree if construction is planned near the tree. If you install a driveway or build a large deck and a sensitive tree is near – it might be better to remove the tree before construction - and later problems - occur.

It would be nice if trees could talk and tell us they have issues. They can't communicate with us in a direct way, so we have to observe them for potential issues and have the trees maintained so they are healthy and less prone to damage from storms.

## Planting Perennials in Clay Soils During Summer

It is difficult for me to resist purchasing perennials put on sale at garden centers and Internet sources in mid-summer. In my case I believed predictions by the Climate Prediction center that called for a summer with average temperatures and above average rainfall this year.

Many experts suggest not trying to “hold” plants to plant in fall. Getting the plants in the soil helps keep the roots cool and allows more water retention. Plant on a cloudy and/or cool day, or in the evening as temperatures are starting to dip.



**Inspect the Roots Before Planting** It is common to find root-bound plants when purchasing in the summer. Research suggests that once plant roots start growing in a circling pattern, they do not readily correct their growth outward when removed from the container and planted in the ground. Don't plant a perennial with circling roots or a ton of roots on the bottom like the plant pictured to the left. I use a sharp knife to make at least 4-5 vertical cuts in the root ball-starting from the top and continuing all the way to the bottom. I also cut through and or remove the roots circling at the bottom. New root growth will occur at these cuts, and this new root growth will grow outward rather than circling.

**Dig the Planting Hole Properly** - Dig the planting hole two to five times wider than the root ball; the wider the hole is dug, the better. Roots will grow more quickly into loosened soil, thus improving the establishment time of the shrub. The topmost roots should be placed level with, or slightly above, the final soil surface at planting. Never dig the planting hole deeper than the height from the uppermost roots to the bottom of the root ball. Slope the sides of the planting hole (as seen in the picture to the right) so you don't create a clay bathtub with steep sides where the roots either will drown or be unable to spread outwards.



**Using Soil Amendments in and Around the Planting Hole** - Danny Lipford from Today's Home expert states "Nowadays, any conversation on this topic tends to dissolve into a hopeless argument between the “do-digs” and the “don't-digs.” Some believe soil amendments are vital to growing healthy plants, while others believe that if it won't grow in your native soil, you shouldn't be planting it. But your native soil is of poor quality, what's a gardener to do? In the past, the standard advice was to blend peat moss or compost with the soil before filling in around the transplant. Now, many experts believe the fill soil should be identical to the surrounding soil. This in theory - will encourage roots to explore outward rather than remain confined in a small area of unnaturally rich soil. The biggest problem with using soil amendments comes from the extreme difference in texture between the amended and native soil. If the difference between the soil in the planting hole

and surrounding soil is large, then the hole will hold too much water and the plant will drown, or the roots will never really venture from the planting hole to the outside world.



**My philosophy is** - Don't overdo it – the biggest issue with soil amendments is what soil amendment you use - and how much you use. Try mixing small amounts of the amended soil with the native soil (no more than ten percent) to prevent the boundary from being such a shock to the plants. I try to dig and amend a larger area (2 times the container size) than the plant container, so the plant has a better place to grow and survive than if I had just planted it in horrible cloddy crappy subsoil alone. If you are a native plant enthusiast, then your argument that native plants would grow better in this situation doesn't fly.

Native plants- just like any plant – hate compacted subsoil clay in an average yard in northern Indiana. They are used to deep rich prairie soil – or organic woodland soils.

Use good compost, or a Canadian sphagnum peat moss/compost mix or a soil containing worm castings and other materials like the organic garden soil pictured to left.



**After Planting** - use a “cage” of hardware cloth or other materials to protect your plants from the multitude of critters who only see your valuable plants as a snack on their way around the neighborhood. **Even better is this scenario:** Your family dog comes inside after “me time” spent in the yard with a guilty demeanor . When you look at the animal and ask ” What have you done?” the dog looks away in apparent nonchalance or just stares at the ground – or if caught in the act – pretends nothing is wrong.

**Ricky's Previous Fortune Telling and Mite Forecast** Like I predicted in the previous issue of Home Horticulture numerous plant diseases appeared as a result of our cool wet spring. Needle cast and Cytospora on spruce? Check... Tomato fungal disease? Check...Anthracnose? Check... Peach Leaf curl? Checkmate.... Anyway, hot and dry summer weather means mites - look for these symptoms of mites on your favorite plants. In general neem is a good overall control for mites on ornamentals and Diatomaceous Earth works well on vegetables such as beans (pictured below). Neem is also the product of choice for Japanese beetles – that will be arriving soon in our area. ....



Mites Dwarf Alberta Spruce



Mites on burning bush







**Natria Weed Control** Recently I tried a product touted on the Internet as an organic weed control for many weeds in lawns and landscapes. Natria basically contains a form of iron – and the company claims that weeds begin to wilt away within hours of application. I mixed the product and tried it on ground ivy – a weed it claims to control. 2 days later – nothing. I then mixed the product at about ten times the label directions (yes, I know) and in fact the ground ivy withered away. I also tried a

formulation that claims to be non-selective (kills everything) with about the same results. I don't believe this product works exactly as claimed – which is common on the Internet. **Follow up:** I actually mixed the two products at high rates and found it burned ground ivy to a crisp. Is the ground ivy truly gone? Or is it just taking a little vacation to return later? Time will tell.



## Hoggles – Demented Cat Logic

**To my caregiver:** *Sorry if I appear out of sorts lately – I just want to say that I know nothing about the torn up new expensive couch upholstery and deep scratch marks on your favorite antique walnut chair. Perhaps some stray feral cat broke into the house late at night to cause such obvious passive-aggressive damage...*

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