



## Shenandoah Rose Society

A Society of the Colonial District

Chartered by the American Rose Society

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Serving the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia and beyond

On the web [www.shenandoahrosesociety.org](http://www.shenandoahrosesociety.org)



### March Meeting

The March meeting of the Shenandoah Rose Society will be the Colonial District pre-spring meeting being held in Staunton March 19 & 20 at the Quality Inn, Exit 225 off I-81. This will be a good educational weekend with seminars in basic rose culture. Everyone should plan to attend.

### From The President

One of the main points of the ARS for 2010 is membership. Not only in recruiting new members but retaining existing members and increasing attendance at meetings. The drop in membership within the ARS seems to have leveled off and hopes are it will start gaining in numbers.

ARS now has three levels of trial membership. There is a \$10 four-month trial membership for people who are not a member of the ARS or a member of a local society. A \$5 four-month trial membership is available for people who are members of a local society but not a member of the ARS. The third level is a free four-month trial membership to people who are joining a local society and are not members of the ARS. If you are a member of Shenandoah Rose Society and not a member of the ARS, you should try the four-month trial membership for only \$5.

The second main point the ARS is working on this year is electronic bulletins or newsletters. Ours is already available via electronic means. I e-mail a copy to the ones I have an e-mail address for each month and it is also available as a download from both the Society website ([www.shenandoahrosesociety.org](http://www.shenandoahrosesociety.org)) and the district website ([www.colonialdistrictroses.org](http://www.colonialdistrictroses.org)). If you have an e-mail address and are not receiving your newsletter by e-mail, please send your address to me [clshaner@yahoo.com](mailto:clshaner@yahoo.com) and I will put you on the list.

There are several advantages to receiving you newsletter electronically.

1. You receive your newsletter two or three days earlier.
2. It saves postage, time, paper and money.

3. You can read it on screen or print it out.
4. Newsletters are archived on the website back 3 years.

There are some excellent programs available to us from the ARS as PowerPoint presentations and they are free. I do not have a PowerPoint projector, but if someone has one I could use for a meeting we could use some of these excellent programs.

To end with some not-so-good news, Mel Albert, one of our past District Directors, passed away in Northern Virginia on February 24. Mel will be greatly missed.

### Soil 101 - Frank & Rita Van Lenten

#### Dirt and Amendments

Master Gardeners are taught almost immediately that “DIRT” is “misplaced soil” (like my hands are “dirty”). The correct term is “SOIL” for what you find on the ground. Usually in the Piedmont region of SC, this red clay soil becomes misplaced on the bottom on our gardening shoes and ends up as “dirt” in the house. This stuff, while it was technically soil, was so bad for growing anything that we prefer to use the ethnic slur “DIRT” in describing it.

Actually, red clay has some good properties: it will retain moisture and it does retain minerals and nutrients better than pure sand, which allows too much drainage and whose nutrients (fertilizer) must be constantly replenished. That being said, we still hate red clay. When it gets dry it is quite hard to dig; you usually dig awhile, give up, etc. We have found that digging a small hole and filling it with water for a day will make digging much easier (LOL). If you mess with red clay when it is wet by digging or tilling, it will destroy the soil structure by compacting and having less air space than before (see bricks). Red clay has particle diameter that is approximately 1,000 times smaller than sand. In order to grow stuff, you really need to amend the soil so that water and air can be incorporated and become better drained. The use of pure sand to

amend the soil will not create bricks as some suggest, but it definitely not the best choice...you need to think ORGANIC materials.

The amendment of choice for red soils is composted fine pine bark mulch. If you can get a truckload, it will be much more cost effective than buying it by bagsful. Compost from your bin which consists of fully decaying organic matter (leaves + grass + manure + vegetable scraps) is also excellent for amending soil. You will need a good-sized bin to make enough compost. Also, make sure it is fully composted before using or you may find tomato plants growing in your roses as we did last year. If you are using animal manure (never dog or cat feces), you will probably want it to compost for a while, especially pig and poultry manure, to avoid burning plants (let it compost until there is little or no smell, usually 6 months or more). Microorganisms in the compost break it down and are great for the soil in continuing to enrich and aerate it. One of the hottest topics recently has been the use of worm "castings" (a.k.a. "poop") as tremendously effective composting material.

When you dig a hole in red clay, we would suggest digging it at least 2-3x wider than the pot containing the plant and at least twice as deep. If the hole still does not drain water within a day, you may want to add some gravel into the hole and/or some organic material to avoid drowning the roots during our occasional deluges between the drought cycles. Add more amended soil, possibly mix in some rock phosphate (for root growth) and lightly tamp down the soil in the hole after the rose bush is set in the hole. Usually we plant the bud union for grafted roses just above the soil line in SC.

Other amendments you might consider are gypsum, which can improved the soil structure and create bigger agglomerated particles which can include more space for air. This only works for soils high in sodium, where it can be replaced by the calcium from the gypsum (which does not raise or lower pH).

We mentioned last month the need for frequent use of limestone in order to keep the pH in the 6.0-6.5 range for maximum nutrient uptake. We have told the tales of our dirt pH being approx. 4-5 (or lower) and needing to add a slurry of limestone to holes poked around the roses to give them an emergency "fix". Limestone, especially the granular kind, takes a while to dissolve and get to the root zone, so it is best to add it in the fall if

you're only adding it once a year. We do it 3-4 times a year.

Other amendments include humate material from compost or from additives like Nature's Nog, Monty's Joy Juice or Rich Earth, which may be in liquid or granular form. These really seem to transport nutrients to the root zone. Also mycorrhizae (from our friends the fungi) have been shown to promote root growth. We will, perhaps, have more on these in a future article. Does anyone know where I can find mushroom compost around here??

### *From Your Local Society Relations Committee*

Greetings to Rose Enthusiasts All,

We are members of the **Local Society Relations Committee** (LSRC) and this is our introductory letter to you. Some rose society members may not have heard of us. Our goal is to provide an immediately accessible link between the **American Rose Society** (ARS) and you and your society. It is our goal to keep you up-to-date with the latest information, services, and benefits available to you from the ARS.

Our individual members are located throughout the United States and we are chaired by ARS Vice-President **Jolene Adams**. Our Committee is comprised of the newest of rose society members to those who have been ARS members for many years. We consist of rosarians who simply want to grow lovely roses to those who are champion exhibitors - we have a wide field of interests and expertise. Please know that we want to field your questions, hear your concerns, share the best ideas that we've gleaned from successful societies and recognize your good work in your own society. We want to help your society to grow even stronger!

You will hear from us through the **ARS & You** on-line publication, on the ARS website itself, through e-mails to your editors, and through individual articles in your district and local society newsletters. However, we cannot be successful in our mission without your help! We need and value your input. While we cannot promise a perfect growing season, we are dedicated to help you with issues facing nearly all rose societies today by providing you with the best information available from the ARS and other sources, and helping you to be aware of and to receive all of the many wonderful benefits that the ARS offers all of its members.

With our best regards,

**Your ARS Local Society Relations Committee  
2010-2012**

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**OBJECTIVES OF THE LOCAL SOCIETY  
RELATIONS COMMITTEE CHARTER**

To work with ARS leaders in finding and implementing programs which strengthen local societies, sharing the best ideas of successful societies and providing recognition for outstanding contributions to the network of the local societies, communities and the ARS.

To coordinate with the National Membership Committee, Programs Services Committee, etc. to relate, update and disperse the latest information and services which benefit local societies and their members.

To use the ARS & YOU and other ARS publications, to promote and publicize the benefits of ARS and its services to members.

To employ the ARS website as a tool for local societies to comment, ask questions and make suggestions and obtain information from the ARS and/or LSR committee.

To act as an intermediary and/or arbitration committee for resolving problems relevant to local societies affiliated with the ARS.

**The Rambling Rosarian**

By Charles Shaner

Are you tired of cold and snow and shoveling? If you are, then it must be time for warm and rain and shoveling! It will soon be time to get in the garden and start those spring chores. That means shoveling to plant those new roses, hoping for rain for ample moisture (as if we don't have enough for now) and the heat that comes for summer garden work.

In a few weeks all of that will start but while waiting, there are a few things you could be doing now such as checking your pruners – do they need sharpening? How about your supply of sprays – do they need to be replenished? What about your sprayer? Get it out and put a quart of water in it to make sure it is working properly. Take a “walk through” of your beds and make a list of what they need. Get you the supplies and mulch you need and be ready for go when the time comes.

If you need Mills Magic, Raymond has about 100 bags in stock. Contact him at Augusta Steel and he will be glad to supply you.

If you have roses on order they will be coming soon if they haven't already arrived. You will need to either plant these in the ground or pot them for planting later. Make sure you have the supplies and soil amendments to do this. The ground may be too wet to plant when you want. I walked across the field beside my house on March 1 and there was about an inch of water standing on the ground.

Remove winter protection? Mine is snow and I hope it melts!

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