

Ida's Notebook



Ida Risser

Georgia, he took his red canoe off of the roof of his car and we went canoeing. We saw several muskrats and a wild, brown duck with five little ones. The mother tried to distract us by swimming rapidly back and forth while the little ones swam to the shelter of a fallen tree. We paddled from the confluence of the Cocalico Creek and the Conestoga River to a dam a distance beyond. The water is still used to drive a waterwheel that grinds wheat into flour.

We have one lame, wild goose that lives here perpetually as its mate was shot by an over-zealous hunter who gunned it down beside our barn. The remaining goose called in plaintive notes for its mate for weeks afterward.

I've even seen a big, red fox standing behind our house. Both he and I were surprised to confront each other. Finally, he turned tail and ran away. It is a rare occasion

when we see a deer on our farm. But we've stood in wonder at the few that wandered our way.

It is nothing unusual to see half a dozen grey squirrels as we drive down our lane. Our corn crib is their biggest attraction. Why, I've

even seen a rabbit, when chased from my cabbage patch, run into the brick smokehouse that stands in the middle of the garden.

Around here one never knows what to expect next. I hope it is not a bear.

Miniature Roses Will Delight Flower Lovers

ITHACA, NY — Rose lovers across the United States soon will see several new varieties showing up in florist shops—not long-stemmed, cut, and boxes ones, but dainty miniature roses growing in pots.

Scientists at Cornell University have developed a way to grow several types of roses in pots in an effort to make such flowers available to consumers year round.

The trick is to control the plant's sensitivity to the several key environmental conditions by adjusting light, fertilization, watering, and soil mix, according to Robert W. Langhans, a floriculturist in the New York State college of agriculture and life sciences at Cornell.

Already popular in Holland and other European countries, the miniature roses have been grown in this country by hobbyists only. To popularize this floral crop here, the Cornell researchers have been developing cultural practices to make such roses available to anyone who wants them.

"Potted roses are easy to produce once the right growing conditions are provided," says Langhans. "For miniature roses, we found that the growing media, or potting soil mix, turned out to be the most important factor in producing healthy plants."

During the experiment, the Cornell researchers found that the regular greenhouse soil mixture didn't work well for potted roses because of poor drainage. Hence, they changed some of the components of the mixture by adding a little more perlite, vermiculite, and peat moss.

With the new formula, the drainage improved. That, in turn, helped prevent disease problems such as root rots deadly to rose plants, Langhans explains.

"With a proper soil mixture, correct amounts of fertilizer, and daily watering, miniature roses thrive," he says. "As a result, we have succeeded in producing healthy, uniform plants."

Several experimental rose cultivars being grown by Langhans and graduate student Wendy Eustace grow no taller than five to six inches, yet they produce blooms with all traditional rose

colors—red, white, pink, and even yellow. The blooms measure about one inch across.

Such miniature roses growing in containers have one big advantage over the time-honored cut flowers. The blooms stay fresh for up to several weeks, compared with the short keeping quality of cut roses, which usually last just a week.

Besides the excellent keeping quality, potted roses will be substantially cheaper. Langhans predicts that once they become available to a mass market, these roses will sell for less than \$5 per pot. Cut roses now cost \$25 or more per dozen.

"This is a buy-it-once, then throw-it-away plant," he says. "When the roses wilt, you go and buy more just as you would any other popular potted flowers, such as chrysanthemums, cyclamen, and geraniums."

Langhans expects that container-grown roses will probably begin to hit the market within a year and will become as common as other kinds of potted flowers in florist shops, five-and-dime stores, and even grocery stores, within five years.

"The miniature roses will give a buyer new choices," says Langhans. "It's an attractive variation of an already enormously popular flower."

Explaining several key steps required to grow potted roses, Langhans says that greenhouse operators pot rooted plants that can be obtained from growers specializing in rooting rose plants. These rooted plants can be kept in cold storage to hold them in a dormant state until they are needed for potting. Thus, a large number of potted roses could be put into production in succession the year round.

"Once a grower puts those rooted plants in pots, it takes only seven to eight weeks to produce marketable plants in full bloom," Langhans says.

Greenhouse operators in many parts of the country are excited about the possibility of mass-producing container-grown miniature roses, according to Eustace.

"It's a perfect gift, though less formal than cut roses, but easily affordable to most rose lovers," she assures.

We sometimes think that we have a wild animals' paradise around here. There are groundhogs and raccoons everywhere. Just last week I saw one of each at

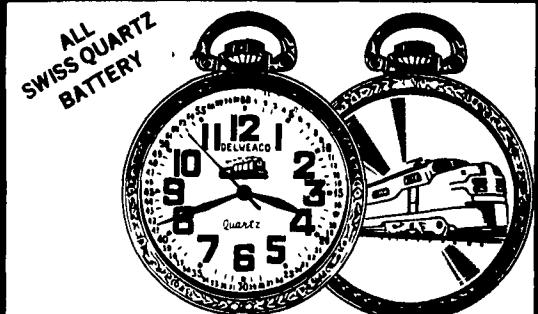
my back porch. Maybe they came to empty the cat's dish which is nearby.

When our son Jeffrey stopped here on his way from Maine to

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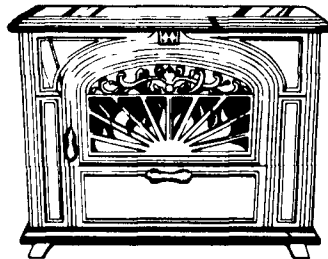


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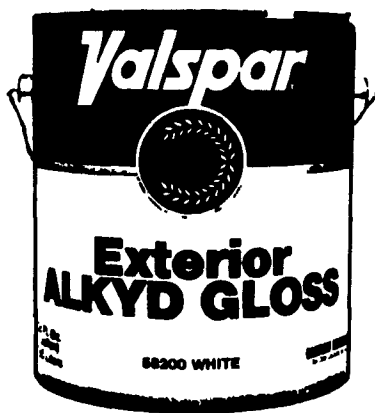
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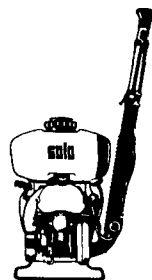
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