

2007 AWARD OF MERIT WINNER

Micro Managing the Manure or the Proof is in the Poop

by Kathleen Lambert, C.R.

This past spring a wave of curiosity, inspired by the speaker from Dr.Earth/Kellogg, put me into scientific mode. I started the experiment with three separate beds which contained a variety of bushes spanning many classes of roses. I prepared by cleaning, weeding, and watering each bed and then the fun began.

In bed #1 I applied Miracle Gro Rose food, using care to follow strict attention to directions (1 tablespoon per 1 gallon of water) and the mixture was tended by hand to each bush.

In bed #2 I applied granules of a generic 16-16-16 plant food using care to work it into the soil. The amount I tried to control to 1/4 cup per bush.

In bed #3 I applied Kellogg's "Bumper Crop" as a one inch mulch over the entire bed.

With all that accomplished, I waited and watched. After 6 weeks or so the results were in. Bed #3 surpassed the others (3 to 1) in blooms. Bed #1 had what I consider normal for my growing habit and bed #2 trailed behind them both. I also noted less black spot in bed #3 but I can not attribute it to the "Bumper Crop" alone.

"Bumper Crop" is composed of forest humus, chicken manure, rice hulls, worm castings, bat guano, kelp meal, oyster shell, dolomite lime, ecto- and endo-mycorrhizae. Quite a cocktail! The price is far less than most rose food brands. It runs under \$10.00 for 2 cubic feet which makes this thrifty gardener happy.

Based on my final conclusion, I went back to Hodge's Nursery and purchased three more bags. Which is a far better solution than the "build bat houses" idea my son had.