

PERK UP YOUR ROSES – ALFALFA TEA RECIPE

Kathy Dodson, Bowling Green Rose Society

Want to perk up your roses this summer? Try making some alfalfa tea. Of course, you don't drink it; your roses do. Here's the recipe from the noted rosarian, Howard Walters.

12 cups of alfalfa meal
½ cup of chelated iron
1 cup of water-soluble fertilizer
½ cup of Epsom's salts

Place a 32-gallon trash can close to your rose bed. Fill it with water, add the alfalfa meal, and stir with a long stick. Cover with a tight fitting lid. Let it steep four or five days, stirring every couple of days. (When you take the lid off, hold your nose. It will smell like the barnyard!)

At the end of the four or five days, stir in 1 cup of a water-soluble fertilizer, such as Miracle Gro, Miracle Gro for Roses, or Peter's 20-20-20; ½ cup of chelated iron; and ½ cup of Epsom's salts. Pour 1 gallon of the mixture on the ground around each rose bush. Give each miniature rose bush one-half gallon.

There will be a thick mixture left in the bottom of the trash can. Fill it again with water and steep for two or three days, occasionally stirring. At the end of that time, stir in 1 cup of water-soluble fertilizer; ½ cup of chelated iron; and ½ cup of Epsom's salts. (One batch of alfalfa meal will be enough to make two 32-gallon containers of alfalfa tea.) Apply this mixture around your roses and other plants.

This tonic can be safely applied to your roses a couple of times each year about 6-weeks apart. You roses should have darker leaves, deeper-colored blooms, and healthy new growth in a week or two. I can see a noticeable difference since I made the first application on June 19.

Where did I find the supplies needed? I purchased the alfalfa meal at Heritage Feed and Grain on Memphis Junction--\$8.50 for a 50-lb. bag. Epsom's salts can be purchased in the drug store, grocery store, or you can order a 25-lb bag at Heritage Feed for about \$21. I found the chelated iron at Frank Otte's Nursery on Scottsville Road and, of course, the water-soluble fertilizer can be purchased just about anywhere.

Make some alfalfa tea; your roses will love you for it!