

CUTTING PROPAGATION OF *ROSA* 'MERMAID'

RAYMOND B. LAWSON

Oderings Nurseries
92 Stourbridge Street, Christchurch

The climbing rose, *Rosa* 'Mermaid', a hybrid with *R. bracteata* parentage, was raised by William Paul in 1917. It has fragrant primrose yellow single blooms and is perpetual flowering until the first frosts. Its habit is very vigorous with thorny branches that are evergreen in mild, and semi-deciduous in cooler climates.

EARLY METHODS

My first attempt at cutting propagation of the rose 'Mermaid' was in the early 1980s. Material was taken during January (mid-summer) from a healthy stock plant grown in a rose walkway within an open-sided glasshouse structure at the garden centre. Using a sharp pair of secateurs, cuttings approximately 150mm in length (10mm diameter) were collected from wood that had flowered with a cut straight across below a bud. Three-quarters of the foliage was removed along with the thorns. A 10 to 20mm wound was made at the base of the cuttings which were dipped into I.B.A. (8% in talc), bundled into tens, and wrapped in damp sphagnum moss with the foliage exposed. The bundles were wrapped in black polythene, bound with a rubber band then placed upright in a tray on a heated bench at 20° C with mist.

This technique was unsuccessful, the cuttings turning black with a 100% loss. My next attempt was with cuttings taken in February which were prepared in the same way. However, instead of bundling and wrapping in sphagnum moss the cuttings were set upright in polystyrene trays containing a peat and sand medium (1:2, v/v).

The cuttings were placed on a heated bench at 20° C with mist. After four weeks, roots appeared under the trays. The rooted cuttings were hardened off for a week, then potted on. The percentage with good roots was 80%. Considering this was the way to go I continued to take cuttings using this method but at varying times of the year. However, the results were only average.

PRESENT DAY TECHNIQUES

Cuttings were taken in February and March (late summer) from wood that had flowered and was of a good thickness (10mm). The cuttings (100 to 150mm) had three-quarters of the foliage and all thorns removed, then they were wounded, dipped in Liba 10,000 at one part to two parts water, for five sec. They were then direct

stuck into pots, half into a peat and sand mix only, and half into the same mix containing dolomite lime, Plantacote, and Ridomil fungicide. Again, pots were put into trays with bottom heat (20° C) and mist. After four weeks approximately 70% had developed a good root system with an indication that the additions to the mix may have been beneficial (Table 1).

Table 1. Effect of amendment¹ to a peat sand mix on rooting of cuttings of *Rosa* 'Mermaid'

| Medium | Percent of cuttings rooted |
|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Peat.sand only | 50 |
| Peat.sand amended | 80 |

¹ See text for amendment details, 40 cuttings per treatment.