

A Chocolate High without the Calories

By Barbara Osterberg

It's not often someone is willing to let me peek into her yard when the garden is dormant, the plants are sleeping and there isn't much color. One brave soul who decided to accept my request to visit her yard is Nell August, a member of the Ventura County Rose Society and the Sunshine Chair.

How can a garden, which is pruned, spectacularly neat, and filled with cacti and roses--look pristine and beautiful in the middle of winter?

Nell's garden was a sight to behold. Have you ever been presented with a chocolate sundae topped with cherries while you were on a diet? Did you surrender to your desire and eat it? I felt like this when I visited Nell's' garden. There were spots of color reflecting the afternoon sun and shapely pruned roses growing out



of rich chocolate colored ground. Everywhere I looked I saw a special surprise. Birdhouses hung from the fruit trees and colorful stepping stones, made by her daughter and son-in-law, were hidden along the paths. Gnomes and frogs peeked out from a bush or played hide and seek beneath a rose bush. Viewing her garden was like eating chocolate without the calories. What a feast!



Nell loves floribundas and miniatures roses and has lined the islands in her yard with them. One can only imagine the riot of color when everything is in bloom come springtime. She seems particularly attracted to the color of roses rather than the fragrance. For a pick-me-up, a trip to the nursery will do just fine. If Nell thinks the color is pretty, she buys the rose. But, like chocolate, one rose is not enough; she comes home with a car load.

Nell learned a lot about gardening from her mother who would wash all of her plants off every morning. She also gained heaps of knowledge from the Ventura County Rose Society programs and speakers. Nell is a strong competitor during the rose auctions. She pointed to several roses that she purchased at the auctions, especially those there were promoted by Jim Delahanty.

Nell likes to study other landscape designs and incorporates her own ideas into her yard. She has designed islands of roses that are easily viewed just by walking along her garden paths, patio, or lawn. Each rose is easily accessible for viewing and smelling.

When it was time for me to leave, I hated to go. I wanted to stay and observe the birds that visited her garden, imagine the color that will soon spread throughout the grounds, and enjoy the intensity of the cacti colors. I went for a story and came home with a box of goodies—cuttings, one of which is a miniature rose called ‘Surprise Surprise.’ Was that as good as chocolate or what!

