

Hybridizing for Fun

By Gail Trimble

Cross-Pollinating

Before you can cross-pollinate, you have to prepare the seed or “mother” parent. The bloom is selected at the same stage as if you were collecting pollen – that is, $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ open for double blooms and showing color for single blooms. If you wait too long in the maturity of the bloom, the stamens of the selected bloom will release pollen onto the stigma of the same bloom, self-pollinating the bloom.

The first step is to remove all of the petals, being careful not to damage the sepals as it seems to adversely affect hip production. One then “emasculates” the bloom - meaning to remove the stamens. One can remove them with fingers, scissors, or knife.



“Emasculated” bloom

Within 2-24 hours the stigma of the selected mother bloom will release a sticky, clear fluid.



Stigma showing sticky fluid

While it is at this point that it is ideally receptive to pollinating, many hybridizers have discovered that

one can pollinate immediately after removing the stamens and the pollen will remain fixed on the stigma even though it is not yet sticky.

Pollinating should be done in the early morning or evening because the heat of the late morning and mid-day sun can cause crosses to fail. Transferring a liberal amount of pollen to the mother bloom’s stigma can be done with a finger (as in the photo below), camel hair brush, or Q-Tip.



If done with a brush, it must be washed in alcohol and dried completely before using it with a different variety’s pollen. If a finger is used, be sure to rinse and dry your finger before applying a different variety’s pollen with it.



Stigma with pollen applied

If you have a lot of pollen, you can repeat the pollination up to three days in a row, but usually it is not necessary. For the first 4 days, some hybridizers cover the pollinated bloom with a paper cup or envelope to keep the sun and/or rain off of it. Never cover with plastic material of any kind unless holes are cut in the corners, because it causes condensation to form on the stigma, ruining the effectiveness of the pollen.