

Festival of Roses

30th year for White Rose

By **ROBERT DONNELLY**
With more than 300,000 roses in bloom, this festival has enough of the thorny-stemmed symbols to even rival the Rose Bowl parade.

White Rose, the largest nursery and garden business in Canada, is celebrating its 30th year with a 'Festival of the Roses'.

Company founder Alex Raab — a former dean of a small horticultural college in Toulouse, France — emigrated to Canada in the early 1950's and settled in Unionville.

Buying a pickup truck, a push mower, shovel, and hedge trimmer, the then 30 year-old fledgling entrepreneur set out to be a gardener.

Two years later, a small shed on a 10 acre lot served as his first nursery and garden centre on Hwy. 7.

Since then, business has never been rosier.

Today, there are 13 locations throughout southern Ontario and two outlets in Orlando, Florida

raking in almost \$10 million in sales each year.

White Rose's success, according to Dave Raab, 24, germinates from the 450-acre Sandoon Farm north of Stouffville.

Alex Raab's youngest son supervises the 110 workers at the farm who are busily preparing for next week's festival which he anticipates should attract as many as 10,000 people.

"That just shows you the kind of interest there is when you can have an open house in the country on a Wednesday in the middle of the summer and have that many people show up," he said.

"Last year (the first for the event), we did it on a whim to see how it would go," he continued. "We expected a thousand people and we ended up with almost 5,000."

A large tent, with seating for 2,000 people, will be set up overlooking the rose fields. During the day, seminars on rose growing and gardening are offered. Bus

and walking tours are also available.

Aside from 50 varieties of roses, a substantial proportion — about 375 acres of the land and three-quarters of the business — is devoted to the nursery across the road.

"To be a full nursery you have to have not only roses, but also a full line of evergreens and shrubs, miniature roses, berry bushes, fruit and shade trees — it's a whole big mixed bag."

Thousands of plants, potted in a special sawdust compost mixture imported from Bancroft, occupies more than 200 greenhouses.

In charge of the propagation of the young seedlings in the main building, he described his job as the most basic and essential to White Rose's success.

"This is where it all begins."

Festival of the Roses at the Sandoon Farm, on the Fourth Line just north of Hwy. 47, is slated for Wednesday, July 30 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. A \$5 bus service to the farm is offered from all White Rose locations. For more information call 477-3330.



Dave Raab shows off a few previews of this Wednesday's 'Festival of the Roses' at White Roses' Sandoon Farm.

Stolen diamond ring found at pawn shop

A 19-year-old Etobicoke woman was arrested by York Regional Police Monday after a Markham woman's stolen diamond ring was found at a pawn shop in Toronto.

Police said the ring valued at \$6,000 was taken from a Cedar Forest Court residence.

The Etobicoke woman is charged with theft and possession over \$1,000. She was released to appear in court Aug. 6.

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