

## **Why We Show Roses**

By: Robert B. Martin, Jr., [petrose@aol.com](mailto:petrose@aol.com).

Why do we show roses? Most of the readers of this publication already have a pretty good idea of the answer to this question. Others I expect might be subscribers because they would like to learn that answer. I begin this issue with a series of articles addressed primarily to the novice exhibitor and I think a good place to start is to address the question of why you should consider showing your roses. There are, as you will learn, many reasons. Here are eight good ones in reverse order for you to consider.

### **#8 You Will Help Your Rose Society**

A central activity of nearly every rose society is the annual sponsorship of a rose show. In this activity the society comes together with a common purpose. The task is not easy; there is much work to do. You belong to your society and hopefully gain advantage in doing so. Without exhibitors there can be no rose show despite all our hard work. So by entering even one bloom you help your society. Call it "solidarity"; whatever -- you will show you care.

### **#7 You Will Encourage Others to Grow Roses**

A rose show is the principal opportunity for rosarians to show non-rose growers the vast potential and beauty of roses. That is why they are open to the public free or at nominal cost. Beauty and pleasure ought to be shared and a true rosarian delights in encouraging others to grow roses.

### **#6 You Will Encourage Rose Growers to Grow Better Roses**

Those who grow the best of roses know well the seemingly inexhaustible potential of the rose. Do a little more for your roses and they will reward you many times over. When you show your beautiful roses others who grow roses will be encouraged to grow better roses. Showing roses illuminates the potential of the rose which is in the grasp of everyone who would try.

### **#5 You Will Learn How to Present and Display Roses**

Roses are beautiful on the bush. They are also beautiful cut and displayed. Is there anyone who has grown roses who has not brought cut roses inside for enjoyment, or taken them to the office, to a friend or to a lover? The rose is a universal symbol of beauty and love. Would you visit a friend or go on a date without grooming first? I suppose in today's times there are some who think that anything "natural" is beautiful, no matter how ugly it is. But it is an affront to the Queen of Flowers to present her dirty and ungroomed. The practice of the art of showing roses will teach you ways to best present the beauty of the cut rose.

### **#4 You Will Learn How to Grow Better Roses**

You might have expected this reason to be number one, as it very well might be. Exhibitors grow

the best roses. If you doubt this in the least go to a show and see. I went to my first show having had at the time over ten years experience in growing roses. I thought I knew everything. I learned that I knew comparably nothing. If you want to grow better roses you must show them. You will get the unbiased opinion of an experienced judge on how well you are doing. Fellow exhibitors will give you pointers. You will experiment and learn from both success and failure. No one can learn to grow the best roses unless they show them. It is that simple.

### **#3 You Will Learn and Reaffirm Good Personal Values**

The great San Diego exhibitor Jeff Stage has said that the trophies at a rose show are usually awarded to those that have worked the hardest. This is true. Growing good roses requires discipline. Roses have their own needs and schedule; they are not interested in your excuse for not feeding them or watering them when they need it. The insects and disease want to take advantage of your attention to other matters. I firmly believe that in this truth we can usually find the reason that many who would call themselves rosarians do not exhibit roses. Losers don't like to compete; this is because no one likes to lose. This is not to suggest that everyone who would belong to a rose society should show roses. Far from it. There is plenty of room for the gardener or rose lover with limited time to join the "experts" to learn how to grow better roses. But if you want to hold yourself out as an "expert" yourself, if you want to speak or write with authority on roses, I continue to believe that you should submit your roses to the test of a rose show.

### **#2 You Will Meet Some Very Nice People**

Winning is great, as any exhibitor will tell you. But better yet, as most exhibitors will quickly add, is the wonderful opportunity that a rose show provides to meet people who genuinely love roses. Rose exhibitors are, with very few exceptions, great people. They come from all walks of life sharing only the common love of roses. They will tell you everything they know to give you the chance to do better than they. The warmth and friendship of exhibitors lasts well beyond the fading of the memory of your novice trophy and will bring you back to the show again and again.

### **#1 You Will Have a Lot of Fun**

Calvin Hayes, who is the premier exhibitor of our District, once confided to me that he can barely sleep the night before a rose show. Neither can I. Silly as it may seem, I compare my feelings the night before a rose show to those I had as a kid on Christmas Eve when I could never seem to get to sleep even though I feared that Santa would find me awake and pass by the house. The anticipation and excitement of an impending rose show is tangible. And on the morning of the show there never seems to be enough time to prepare and enter all of my roses. The hours before the show closing fly by and afterwards I find myself holding my breath while the judging is going on and I am trying to eat breakfast. When the show is fully judged and I am admitted I experience great joy and deep disappointment in my personal results. But no matter how well I do I find the beauty of all the roses in the show overwhelming. This is great fun and that is the number one reason we show roses. You can do it too and I promise you that you will love it if you try.

**Editor's Note:** In 1992-1993 I wrote a series of articles for The Pasadena Rose titled "The Novice Exhibitor" the purpose of which was to acquaint the members with exhibiting roses in preparation for our inaugural rose show. Thinking this an appropriate subject for the larger audience in REF I plan to rework the series and present it as a regular feature.

*The foregoing article in its original version won a 1992 ARS Award of Merit.*