

How to be a Winning Exhibitor

By Mary Maud Sharpe

Learn How to Grow Good

Learning to grow good roses is a work in progress. Learn the basics and then continue to do the things that have proven successful for you (if it isn't broken, don't fix it). It is better to have fewer roses and take care of them well, than to have too many roses and not take proper care of them. Know your roses and be sure to label each variety with the correct ARS exhibition name. Roses are disqualified if not properly named.

Read and Understand the Schedule

It is very important to read and understand all the rules governing the show. If you are a novice, there are special rules. If you have questions ask the show chairman for help before the show. On show day ask the classification chairman. Other exhibitors will be willing to help you after they make their entries.

Selecting Blooms

The blooms from your garden that you plan to exhibit at the show should be as perfect as possible. The form should be typical of the variety and generally as symmetrical as possible. Blooms need to be fresh and if stamens are showing they need to be yellow and not showing discoloration. The petals should have substance. Follow the schedule to be sure your roses are in the form required for the class (exhibition, open or most perfect form of beauty).

Cutting and Storing Blooms

Cut your blooms as near to the show date as possible. However, they may be cut earlier and stored in a refrigerator. Be sure to cover all blooms that are stored to retain substance (this is not necessary if using a florist refrigerator). Refrigeration may change the color of some varieties. It is advisable to use a preservative if blooms are cut early and stored. (Four tablespoons of vinegar, four teaspoons of sugar and one half teaspoon of bleach in one gallon of water works well). Keep all foliage which will not be below the top of your container. Clean foliage if spray materials are evident. A mild detergent solution will usually do the job. Protect foliage by wrapping (waxed paper works well) so that there are no tears in the leaves. If you need to remove any outside petals, gently rock them so as not to leave any evidence of removal. In removing petals balance the removal so that the bloom retains its symmetry.

Transporting Blooms

Carry your blooms to the show in a suitable container. If traveling a long distance you may want to use a cooler type container. Handle blooms very carefully. Do not allow your blooms to become bruised.

Plan Your Entries

Select which blooms will be entered in the classes you plan to enter. Obtain entry tags ahead of time and fill them out before the day of the show if possible. Print cards legibly. In most shows exhibitors may use preprinted address labels for name and address. This will save you time on show day and you will be better organized as you make your entries.

The Day of the Show

Plan to arrive at the show early so that you will have time to enter all of your blooms. If you need help don't be afraid to ask. Select the proper container for your bloom(s). Re-cut the stem and be sure that it is in the water of the container. You may use a wedge to position your specimen in the container. To help open blooms gently blow into them. Your warm breath helps to relax the petals. For floating exhibits, plan to enter them last as they may tend to sink with time. To level a floating bloom, drop a small amount of water at the base of a petal on the high side. Attach your completed entry tag and take your entry to the classification table.

Good Luck! Enjoy the Show!