

A Different Kind of Rose Show or Celebration or FESTIVAL

The Ventura Rose Society offers a different kind of rose show this coming September 29, 2001. In fulfillment of its educational mission as dictated by the By-laws of the Society, there will be not only the traditional ARS Rose Show, but also a series of Seminars on various rose topics, hands-on demonstrations of rose-related topics and a Celebration of all roses patterned after the famous Celebration of Old Roses in El Cerrito in northern California each Spring. The genesis of this amalgam of various strands in the development of rose display can be found in the changing dynamics of the membership of the Ventura County Rose Society in the first place. The name for the new entity would be the Ventura County Rose Festival.

The Genesis

Early last spring the Ventura County began offering a chance for its members to display roses that did not meet the regular standards for the Little Rose Show. That is, the roses need not be groomed, there was no need to stress over being judged, and there was no need to fill out the cards indicating class, name, and official designation, etc. The alternative structure was designated as a Celebration of Roses. On the Celebration side of the room, It was your basic Show and Tell adapted to adults demonstrating roses. The alternative was a major success and the first few opportunities seemed to swamp the offerings in the Little Rose Show which had been a staple of VCRS for a gazillion years.

In time there came to be more of a parity between the entries in the Celebration and the entries in the Little Rose Show. A survey in late spring indicated that the members of the Society regarded both parts of the monthly meeting the Celebration and the Little Rose Show as of equal value in assessing the performance of the society.

The success of the Celebration engendered an interest in presenting it at the same time as the traditional Rose Show which usually started off the Fall exhibiting season in Southern California.

The Adaptations

The decision to offer both a Celebration at the same time as the traditional Rose Show was not without some risks and dangers. A recent discussion among rose exhibitors on the Gardenweb Forum indicated that the traditional rose show sucked up so much energy and time from both the producers and exhibitors that there was none left for alternative or even supplemental educational activities. Other writers noted that the response to supplemental activities such as seminars or lectures was so minimal that the returns were totally inadequate to the effort expended. Sometimes the venue of a rose show (a mall, for example) militated against having either alternative or supplemental educational activities for lack of suitable space.

In the end, the Ventura County Rose Society decided to offer a Rose Festival which would include a Celebration of Roses, a series of educational Seminars or Presentations, a one hundred and fifteen minute array of revolving hands-on demonstrations, and a traditional rose show modified to meet some enduring concerns.

The Traditional Rose Show

The traditional ARS Rose Show would be offered with a diminished number of classes for arrangements, but with an increased number of classes for some OGR and modern roses as well as categories for best organically grown rose as another for mystery and found roses. The changes in the arrangements classifications followed the recommendations of one of the nation's most respected arrangements judges as well as those of the distinguished District Arrangements Judges Chair, Kreg Hill; the changes were dictated by the relatively small number of entrants in the last rose show offered two years ago.

Polyantha roses were separated from the Floribunda entries and given parity in the number of classes (3).

In the Miscellaneous Section, a Best Organically Grown Rose class was opened to any single bloom without sidebuds grown in a chemical free garden. Some questions arose with reference to the determination of whether or not a garden were chemical free. Attempts to refine the definition eventually yielded two conclusions: free might be more indicative of the intent of the category framers. And the other was that the determination of chemical free would have to be left up to the individual judgment of the potential exhibitors, since there were no chemical free police to monitor such labels absent some commercial aspect to the designation. Additionally, members of the VCRS believed that the corrosive effect of cheating to win a trophy would sufficiently penalize anyone who took advantage of the situation.

Another category bound to arouse some interest was a trophy class for Found or Mystery roses whose identity had been lost over time. The standard for judgment was Horticultural Excellence. Judges were asked to supply identities if they were able to do so. As is traditional at Ventura County Rose Shows an additional five classes were reserved for members of the society to enter.

The net result was eight categories were either added or substituted out of a total of some forty-six total classes; eliminating the classes reserved for the members of the Ventura County Rose Society would mean that nearly 20 per cent of the show was adapted to the particular circumstances of the Ventura County area; other changes in the future might reflect renewed interest among rose breeders in non-traditional rose categories (shrubs, patios, ground covers, etc.).

Another adaptive change was to collapse the time between the judging and the awarding of the trophies. There were several rationales that led to this decision. One was to lessen the amount of time that exhibitors would have to spend waiting for the awarding of trophies. Frequently rose show schedules place the awarding of trophies in the late afternoon of the Rose Show day; this extends the day of many exhibitors who have traveled a long distance at early a.m. hours to the straining point. (the discouragement is surely unintentional). Awarding the trophies as soon as possible enables the day of the long distance exhibitor to be collapsed without running the danger of a collapsing exhibitor. Additionally, of course, to the degree that the trophies are collected by the wining exhibitor, there is less chance that the winning roses will be lost in a sea of silver and crystal or engraved rocks. And, of course, to the undifferentiated viewing public, the awarding of trophies has the limited appeal of root canal work.

The Celebration

The Rose Celebration intended to emulate the techniques of the famous Rose Celebration held each Spring in the Bay Area by the Heritage Rose Group. The main difference would be that the scope of the roses to be displayed would be all-inclusive rather than restricted to Old Garden Roses. People would be encouraged to bring any roses that they wished to share with other people. No roses would be disqualified and no roses would be precluded although people were encouraged to check to see that a sharing of roses did not include a sharing of pests. Otherwise, the entry table would request a name and type in order to place the rose. The roses would be grouped if there were repeat entries. It is expected that there would be a general abundance of roses commonly sold in local nurseries along with greater display of roses that don't necessarily fit into traditional or even untraditional rose classifications such as the patio roses, ground covers, decorative miniatures, and or various ramblers, climbers, shrubs, or home or family treasures.

The Revolving Demonstrations

An offshoot of the Celebration idea was to create a series of hands-on demonstrations lasting about

twenty minutes or so. A total of four different demonstrations could be secured within a one hundred and fifteen minute framework assuming reasonable diligence about maintaining a martinet schedule. The topics to be covered include:

- Rose Arrangements with a view to ARS arrangement standards (Note that this topic addresses one of the weaknesses in the Rose Show as adapted;)
- Rose Cuisine The use of roses in food preparation from the purely artistic to the essential focus including the nutritional aspects of rose ingestion;
- Pest and Disease diagnosis with an emphasis on organic measures for prevention and control; and
- Propagation of roses through cuttings and budding.

Each table for hands-on demonstrations assumed a maximum of twelve participants and the timing would coincide with the morning entries for the rose celebrants and the judging of the roses in the Rose Show.

The Seminars

At the last Ventura County Rose Seminars there were three presentations offered to visitors to the Rose Show one on container plantings, one on companion plantings, and a third on Old Garden Roses. The attendance equaled nearly three-dozen people. So the decision was made to offer a series of presentations that would start at noon and run on a 30/15 format. A presentation could be made, either in the form of a lecture, or a slide presentation, or through any suitable means for thirty minutes; this would be followed by a fifteen-minute question and answer session. The final fifteen minutes of each hour would be used for setting up the room for the next presentation.

The schedule was as follows:

12:00 p.m. Linda Banner-Bacin of the VCRS Roses in Containers Are Easy.

1:00 p.m. Judy Miller of the Huntington Botanical Gardens Climbers and Ramblers.

2:00 p.m. Sue O'Brien owner of Tiny Petals Nurseries How to Kill a Mini Rose or Not!

3:00 p.m. Bob Edberg, owner of Limberlost Rose Books Old Garden Roses Opinions and Attitudes.

Sue O'Brien graciously offered to provide a plant of White Chocolate for a raffle, the drawing to conclude her talk. This idea was received so favorably, that the decision was made to punctuate all of the presentations with a raffle rose drawing suitable to the topic; thus, the container rose raffle would feature Pink Gruss an Aachen, the garden structure, Climbing Cramoisi Superieur, and the OGR, a rare Portland, Indigo.

It was recognized that there might be overlap between the trophy presentations of the Rose Show and one or more of the seminar presentations, but the judgment of the Festival producers was that the audiences would be different.

Conclusion and Speculations

Originally, it was hoped that this format could be tested in order to see whether a combined rose show, celebration and other educational techniques could be combined in such a way as to appeal to the largest number of people while still performing both traditional and non-traditional functions. However, another ARS rose show will be held on the same day, thus dividing the limited number of exhibitors in the Southern California area. On the other hand, of course, there are many roads to salvation and the greater the exposition of roses the greater the number of people converted to its cause.

Even at this early date, six weeks before the Rose Festival, some conclusions can be drawn

- The increase in the number of participants in a Rose Festival as compared with the traditional rose show can be ameliorated somewhat by the fact that the VCRS experience has indicated that new people tend to move in and provide personnel for the alternative modes of presentation. While there is some crossover in the people working on various aspects of the Celebration, Rose Show, Demonstrations and Seminars, there is an increase in the total number of people involved.
- General agreement has already evolved that if the hands-on demonstrations work as planned with only minor tweaking necessary for the future, in time the demonstrations might subsume the seminars or vice versa. One suggestion has been for the combined demonstrations/seminars to offer to the general community the best of the programs presented at the Society throughout the year, or at least the most practical and utile ones.
- The expectation that the compressed trophy presentation would have aided long distance exhibitors will not be fulfilled since the current expectation is that exhibitors will most likely attend shows geographically proximate to them; thus exhibitors in the San Diego and Orange County areas would most likely attend the more proximate show.
- Initially, the question arose in the planning of the Rose Festival as to what would be the appropriate standards indicating success or failure in the endeavor. A rigid attention to numbers was rejected in favor of a more subjective standard namely, whether the endeavor provided fun for the executors of the plan as well as to the general public. This has elicited sardonic inquiries at moments of great stress

Are we having fun yet?

All of the participants in the planning and execution are aware that the combining of a rose show and a Celebration is no cure for cancer nor even a cure for the doldrums of the perennial question of membership totals in the American Rose Society. But it does offer the opportunity to bring in new people with new interests and new attitudes as part of the mix of people who populate local rose societies. The introduction of essential change into any ongoing project yields a great deal of tension and stress that sometimes obscure the potential for a synthesis of old and established patterns. Whether or not this attempt to produce a different kind of rose show succeeds or fails is of less importance than the fact that the attempt should be made in the first place. The staging of the combined events is its own justification whatever the outcomes.

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