

GROOMING ROSES: MAKE THE BEST BETTER

John & Donna Hefner



When we were growing up in our Indiana rural community, Donna and I were fortunate to be 10-year 4-H members. Our individual experience was valuable for many reasons, however, the 4-H motto of **"Make the Best Better"** made a lasting impression on many areas of our lives. To this day, we remain committed to this motto.

NO FEAR

When grooming roses for competition, one may not be able to make a "silk purse" from a "sow's ear," but striving to make a specimen better should be the mindset of the exhibitor. To be successful in grooming roses, one must first remove the fear of failure. The best way to overcome that fear is to practice grooming in your garden and home. Improving your grooming experience and "tweaking" your talent is invaluable due to each variety's characteristics such as petal shape and exhibition form. Remember that practice brings confidence and eventually success. A successful exhibitor must become proficient in learning about the varieties they grow (or should grow) and the growing/opening characteristics for each variety you plan to exhibit.

HERE ARE OUR TOP TIPS

CONDITIONING & REFRIGERATION

Although conditioning is not a direct part of the grooming process it is however valuable that your blooms be properly hydrated. Conditioning specimens in warm water in a cool dark area is mandatory for exhibiting success. Using a 5 gallon bucket, place the stem of your specimen in warm water up to the neck of the bloom and hydrate your specimen for a minimum of an hour. After conditioning, clean and trim foliage and remove any unnecessary growth before placing in refrigeration.

We suggest practicing refrigeration of blooms throughout the growing season. You will find the petals of some blooms will not move once they are placed in the refrigerator but you can work with the petals once the bloom warms up. Be aware that the blooms of some varieties will never move once they have been refrigerated.

Another suggestion for grooming excellence is to allow specimens to warm up after arriving at the preparation area so petal movement becomes easier and reduces the risk of petal tear. The warming

process may begin the evening before the show, on the way to the show or simply the time you groom your roses in the prep area.

DAY OF SHOW

On the day of the rose show, allow yourself ample time to pack, travel and groom your roses since this day can become stressful if you do not plan your prep time efficiently. Upon arrival at the rose show, begin by taking out only the number of blooms you can successfully handle at a given time. Recut each stem to allow it to “take up” additional moisture and place it in a vase. This is an excellent time to recheck for side growth that was not removed at home. Place these roses at different areas on your grooming table by classes you desire to enter. Then, it is back to your other roses that also desire to compete in the show.

KNOW YOUR BLOOMS

Learning the characteristics of the blooms you plan to exhibit becomes invaluable experience. Attempting to copy the grooming techniques of another exhibitor does not always work to your advantage due to difference in location of gardens, watering and other cultural programs. You must know your garden, what your soil requires to produce excellent show quality blooms and what varieties compliment each other if placing them in challenge classes.



ASK QUESTIONS

At local, district and national rose shows, workshops and meetings, make observations and ask questions of experienced exhibitors is suggested. Remember, exhibitors always love to talk about roses and are always willing to help other rosarians increase their knowledge. Plus, their assistance is “free.”

Over the years we have been exhibiting, we have always learned something new about our rose hobby or exhibiting roses at each rose show we have attended! Take advantage of this day to learn more about roses as well as your fellow rosarians, their gardens and varieties they grow.

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

When grooming hybrid teas and one bloom per stem specimens, the use of Q-tips and chenille craft-type balls placed between the rows of petals is also recommended for ease of petal movement to the desired form. When using chenille balls, use a bright color that can easily be seen and removed using your fingers or tweezers before placing your bloom in a show. Keep in mind, the goal is to have the specimen form a circular outline with proper petal arrangement while displaying a high center.

TRIMMING

Trimming the imperfections of petal edges is another way you can improve the final visual effect of your bloom. This can be accomplished by using manicure or craft scissors to trim blooms and foliage. Again this is something you can try at home - do not wait until show day to experiment.

WHAT ABOUT SPRAY ROSES

Exhibiting sprays can be fun due to the overall excepted geometric shapes. When grooming sprays, the emphasis is placed upon the visual inflorescence; therefore, uniformity of appearance is extremely important. The removal of petals or other growth that may be a distraction may require cleaning up your florets, plus removing spent blooms and unwanted growth. If open blooms are in your specimen, you may desire to remove the small undeveloped petals so fresh stamens can be seen. This can be accomplished by using your finger tips or tweezers.

TOP TIP:

Remember, do not make your exhibit look “manufactured,” it must look natural.

TEAMWORK

Exhibiting as a team makes for a less stressful day. Teamwork allows for efficiency on show day especially when exhibiting multiple challenge or horticulture classes. In the preparation room, Donna concentrates on open blooms, sprays and wedging, while I concentrate on grooming one bloom per stem specimens. Her assistance in helping me choose a final rose for our entry, staging and her desire for perfectionism has always been valuable to our exhibits.



LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Exhibiting is a constant learning experience and sharing of information is always valuable. Successfully exhibiting blooms from your garden is one way to highlight your love of the rose and educate the public.

May you always make the best better!