

The Grooming KitOn Your Way To Winning

By: Richard Anthony & Kristine Vance

Chances are most of you have noticed the seasoned exhibitors carrying numerous roses into the grooming area of a rose show. What many novices may miss is that all highly experienced exhibitors also carry a **grooming kit** along with their many beautiful roses. What exactly is a grooming kit? It typically is a tackle or craft box that was intended to store fishing tackle or craft items but for an exhibitor holds various tools used in grooming a rose. Sizes vary according to individual preferences as do the contents of each kit. Below we are going to take a look at various grooming tools that we use and what they are used for in preparing your roses to be all they can be on your quest to winning. Remember, you can remove anything you want from a rose with the exception now of sepals, but adding to the rose in anyway shape or form is a major **NO – NO**.

Turkey Baster – is used by exhibitors to top off vases before submission of entry as well as to fill vases for floaters and the English Box/Artist Pallet tubes.

Brushes – most exhibitors will carry several different size artist brushes in their grooming kit. Camel hair brushes are typically the most popular. The brushes are used to remove foreign matter from the petals, to manipulate the blooms and also to lift up a sunken center.

Clippers – either finger nail or toe nail clippers are the tool of choice for the removal of ancillary buds that were missed during the finger pruning stage in the garden. Other tools of choice for the exhibitor are cuticle nippers and the **Fiskar Micro-Tip** pruner.

Knitting needles – are used by many to position petals as well as to improve the overall form of the bloom. Some exhibitors employ a ball stylus for this as well.

Knives – are carried by most exhibitors. The Exacto knife, surgeon's scalpel and ordinary kitchen knives work well for the exhibitor. The primary purpose of the knives is to reduce the size of oversized canes in order that they will fit into a single stem vase. Some exhibitors will use the knife to scratch the area around where the ancillary bud was removed as it will turn black about an hour or so after removal. Knives also aid in cutting some wedging material.

Leaf Cleaning Material – will vary from paper towels to wash cloths with most forms of cloth being used. The key is to find something that will enhance the natural sheen of the leaf without damaging the leaf in the process.

Q-Tips – are favored by many exhibitors to open and position the outer petals of a rose. As we have been DQed more times than we care to admit for failing to remove Q-tips, we are

going to use colored Q-tips this year at least on white roses as they can be difficult to see at the last minute when racing to enter your blooms. Cotton balls are also used by some exhibitors to accomplish the same thing.

Scissors – are probably the second most used tool in an exhibitor’s grooming kit. The most common pair of scissors used is the deckle edge shears which are used to reduce the size of leaves that are out of proportion to the size of the bloom. They are also used to reshape damaged leaves (burnt edges, insect bitten, etc.). Most kits will typically contain one size for Hybrid Teas and another for Miniatures and Minifloras. Other scissors of choice for the exhibitor are beauty supply quality scissors that are used to trim petal edges. A rose with a blemished edge can be materially improved with skillful trimming.

Tweezers – are most often used by exhibitors to remove something from the rose such as a damaged interior petal or a petaloid (immature petal close to stamens) or darkened stamen from an open bloom.

Wedging – typically is a matter of preference for the exhibitors. Some prefer to use Saran Wrap, aluminum foil, and canes of other roses. We prefer the pale blue R39 Insulation Styrofoam for wedging all roses. We cut these up ahead of time and place in sandwich bags so not to take time away from actually grooming the roses in the prep room. Remember to double check each rose show schedule to ensure you are only using “approved” wedging.

Rose Identification Book - it’s important, especially if you are new to exhibiting, to carry a rose identification book with you to a show. Again there are several sources out there but we prefer to use ***Combined Rose Listing, compiled and edited by Beverly R. Dobson and Peter Schneider***. This book has saved us on more than one occasion. The 2009 *Combined Rose Listing* is now available at www.combinedroselist.com

Miscellaneous Grooming Tools – many exhibitors will incorporate address labels, address stamps, entry tags, eye dropper, magnifying glass, paper towels, pens with either blue or black ink, rubber bands, tooth picks, untreated shoe shine cloth and wash cloths. Items such as rubber bands and entry tags are normal supplies that most shows provide. We however generally order entry tags from the ARS at the beginning of each show season so we are ready for the first show. Understand that with as many entries as we have, we complete most of the tags at home the night before the show. We then replenish our tags when we get to the show. This saves us a great deal of time.

One other item we use is an eye dropper bottle filled with lemon juice or water with a drop or two of bleach added. We add a drop of the solution to a recently removed or prepped side bud in order to prolong the darkening of side bud scars. On the surface we question whether we should do this but as almost all highly successful exhibitors do the same thing, and it is a common practice, we overlook the fact that nothing is allowed to be added to the rose to improve its appearance.

As my friend and mentor told me several years ago; a rose show is like a beauty contest with all roses being beautiful; it is up to the exhibitor to enhance the beauty of the rose. This is accomplished via grooming techniques combined with the grooming tools in your grooming kit.

As always, if you have questions regarding this or other articles that we have written please direct them to Richard at RJA4CPA@aol.com or Kristine at beancntr30@wideopenwest.com