

Are You Ready To Exhibit.....It All Begins With Planning

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As we begin to move closer to the official first day of spring, our thoughts should turn to an honest evaluation regarding how we did last year and where we want to go. What do we need to do to become better? Are we trying to become the best exhibitors around, are we considering exhibiting for the first time or is it something in between. Once you have honestly evaluated what it is that you want, forming a game plan is the next logical step.

Your game plan should take you very close to where you want to go. It should also include the necessary steps to take you to that next level whether you are on the verge of becoming a top exhibitor or planning to exhibit for the first time. Improvement is the name of the game and the way to accomplish that objective is to begin with a game plan.

Accordingly, the first item on your agenda should be roses. In business, the top performers typically have a philosophy of up or out. It is no different with roses. Yes, you can have a favorite or two that will never win a blue ribbon but a garden full of them will do you no good come rose show day. Take a look at ARS publications that discuss winning roses for the past five and ten year periods. Ask the best exhibitors around what wins in your area. Once you have done this, it is not too difficult to begin the process of weeding out non performing roses and replacing them with potential queen of show roses. This can happen all at once if your garden is small or may take a few years if you have many roses; the point is if you want to win you must have winning roses.

In addition to winning roses in your garden, a mentor will help you immensely to accomplish your objectives. It doesn't matter if your objective is to become the best exhibitor or if you want to win your first blue ribbon; a mentor will reduce the time it takes for you to succeed. Your mentor will answer questions and help you along the way. He or she will help you to eliminate or reduce mistakes. It is fairly common knowledge that it takes about six years of serious exhibiting to compete at the national level. It is almost as difficult to win that first blue ribbon at a local rose show without some assistance from a mentor. Your helping hand can be the best local exhibitor or an exhibitor who has fared well at district and national rose shows. Ideally this individual will live within close proximity. Closeness allows your mentor to visit your garden so they can see firsthand rather than provide guidance through what I like to call "interpretive gardening". We have all had the "looks like" conversations which doesn't always produce the best results. Keep in mind though it is better to have a long distance mentor than none at all.

Another overlooked aspect about exhibiting is clerking. Our suggestion is to clerk at every rose show you exhibit at. Not only will you gain a better understanding of why a rose wins

but you will gain an appreciation for what judges look for in a winning rose. Most local rose shows will welcome new comers and serious exhibitors alike as clerks. We typically will volunteer to clerk at both District and National rose shows. We do this for two very important reasons. When you clerk with a team of top judges, you are going to gain some knowledge that you did not have before hand. The other reason is that the expense associated with the rose show is tax deductible if you happen to clerk or judge at the rose show; win-win to our way of thinking. Leave it to us accountants to find a way to make some of our hobby tax deductible!!!

Our final suggestion is to continue to read anything and everything you can about growing and exhibiting roses. Bob Martin's book "Showing Good Roses" will help the novice as well as the experienced exhibitor improve their chances of winning at rose shows. Horizon Roses will help all exhibitors select winning roses for your garden. It is also important to review past show results (www.roseshow.com) to see what is winning in your area. You might be surprised to learn that some districts prefer a certain color of rose. It's better to know upfront that a white rose has won queen 4 out of the last 5 years before you enter 4 pink blends for queen and use your white roses in challenge classes. And last but not least consider obtaining a copy of the ARS publication "Guidelines for Judging Roses". The more an exhibitor understands what a judge looks for and how a rose is judged, the better you will become at exhibiting at rose shows.

Next up "Things You Need In The Garden" will concentrate on roses; how many and what types of roses do you need in order to win.

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