

# Exhibiting Roses is FUN!

by Stacey Catron

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OK, I know you don't believe me.

Why would anyone want to get up at 5:00 AM, drive 100 miles to enter a show with hardcore exhibitors?!

Because it is fun.

Because a rose show is filled with roses! All sizes and varieties! Such a sight to behold. It is fun to walk through the aisles, looking at the roses that you've only seen in catalogs or on the internet, checking out the size and color, sticking your nose in it to see if it is fragrant. Sometimes, you'll be lucky enough to see the person who exhibited it and can ask them questions about it, how it grows for them. Getting knowledge of a rose from a local rosarian is invaluable!

Because a rose show is filled with rosarians! People like you who love roses. After their entries are in (and sometimes while they are prepping them) most exhibitors love to talk about their roses!

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I've been attending West Jersey's show since 1997, usually with my friend Diane Wilkerson, making a day of it. We enter our roses, and clean up. Then we drive to Philly for lunch. Afterwards, we go back to the show and see how our entries did. We've also been going to Del-Chester's show for many years. Although it is a little bit of a drive (a little over 2 hrs), Longwood Gardens is worth it. We enter our roses, and then walk around the gardens, enjoying the conservatory, fountains, the idea gardens; we still haven't seen the whole place yet! We eat at their wonderful restaurant that is a little bit of a splurge (although they have a take-out one as well), then look to see how we did, then onto the awards table and the arrangements. A rose show makes for a great day out based on roses!

There is no stress by entering another society's rose show as hardly no one will know you and you won't feel obligated to help out or worry about what needs to be done. You can just enjoy the show!

You grow good roses, don't you? Of course you do. Do the blooms please you as they open in your garden, right? If they please you, they will please the public viewing the show. I've watched the public experiencing the show. They love to see roses of all sizes, shapes and colors. It is fun to watch people sniff the different roses in the fragrance category. If the roses please you and the public, then they will probably even please the judges.

Do you cut your roses to bring inside when you have company in the summer or do you share a bouquet with friends or family? If so, then you are already informally exhibiting your roses.

You don't need to bring a lot of roses to the show. My first show I entered two blooms.

You don't need to bring "show roses" to the show. Typically there is a category for every type of rose in the show.

If you can, get a copy of the rose show program and look it over. Many are available for the asking, my email, or posted on websites. You'll see what I mean. You will have to know what roses you have, the name of the variety (i.e. Simplicity, Double Delight, Blaze...), the rose category (floribunda, hybrid tea, climber...) and color class (medium pink, red blend, medium red...). If you know the name, the rest is easy to find by looking in the ARS "Handbook for Selecting Roses." If you do not have this book, they should be available at the show, but researching will take up valuable setting up time. Look for the novice classes in the rose show program. Try to enter your roses in the novice classes if you and your roses meet the criteria for that category. The judges are less critical of roses entered in the novice class, so you're more likely of a ribbon or even a place on the awards table! I've won prizes with non-exhibition roses such as "Simplicity", a David Austin "Leonard Dudley Braithwaite" and "Taboo," which are not your standard exhibition hybrid tea.

Look in your garden for roses that you could enter. What looks nice? I suggest cutting roses that are somewhere past bud stage and 1/2 open. You will want to cut long stems and keep the foliage on. Large roses like hybrid teas, larger Austin-style blooms, floribunda sprays should be on 17-20" stems. Miniatures should have 5-7" stems. Mini-floras should be on 7-9" stems. If your stems are not that long, cut what you can. If you have a beautiful bloom with not much stem at all (HT with a 5" stem for example), bring it too, as there are other categories such as rose in a bowl, rose in a picture frame, or rose palette. If you have a rose with great fragrance, but poor stem and/or foliage, cut it and enter it in the fragrance class (which is judged solely on fragrance).

You do need to bring “fresh” roses. “Fresh” looks good and will win ribbons. Fresh roses look like they were just picked from the bush. Of course, the morning of the show, you can peruse your garden and pick what looks good then, put it in a bucket of water, then drive to the rose show so that you will enter “fresh” roses. Of course, this is not always possible. The weather and your roses are unpredictable. You can cut roses as early as the Wednesday before our Saturday show by storing the roses in the refrigerator. To do this, start by bringing a bucket of water into the garden with you. Cut the rose stem and immediately put it into the bucket of water and continue putting as many roses in as needed. Bring the roses inside. Pour water into the kitchen sink and cut the stems once again, this time under water slightly up from the original cut. If you are ambitious, now is the time to clean the leaves of spray residue (a cotton dishtowel works well). Put the roses into a container with water in it. For large roses, I use 1/2 gallon orange juice containers because they hold up well and I can throw them away after I’ve entered my roses. If you want you can use a packet of floral preservative (the kind that comes with florist’s arrangements) or a homemade formula (1 gallon water, 12oz. can clear non-diet soda, 1 T bleach) as the liquid to store the roses in. If you have a frost-free refrigerator (most of us do), make sure you lightly cover the blooms with a plastic bag, 1 gallon Zip-loc or plastic bags from the grocery store work well. If the roses will be in the refrigerator more than a day, every day the roses are in the refrigerator, flip the bags inside out and put back on the blooms. This will keep the condensation off of the petals.

The day of the show you will want to bring your roses (of course), plastic wrap or wax paper (to wedge in the vase to help the rose stand up straighter), pruners, small scissors (to cut away any torn leaves), soft cotton towel (last minute cleaning and polishing of leaves), rubber bands (sometimes needed to adhere entry tag to specimen being entered) and a water-proof pen (to fill out entry tags). I put these in a bag the night before so that I don’t forget them.

The day of the show, arrive early. Avoid looking at anyone else’s roses. They will always look better than what you brought. (I still do this and avoid setting up near the best exhibitors). Gather vases and entry tags. Put your roses in the vases and stuff wedging material (check show schedule for approved materials) around the stem to make the bloom more upright, if needed. Fill out an entry tag for each rose you are entering. Refer to the show program for class number. Fold the tag over and tuck the end into the cut out flap, and then place the entry tag on the vase. When you are through with your entries, place them into the appropriate numbered class in the show. It doesn’t hurt to double check that you are in the correct class, especially when you see your hybrid tea rose is going in a class with all miniature sprays! That’s all there is to it!

Once you’ve entered all your roses, it is time to sit back and wait. Clean up your area, go get something to eat or drink, or better yet, see if they need anyone to clerk (judges’ assistant). Clerking requires little or no experience and you get to see the judging process first hand. Make sure you come back soon after the judging to see your results and the other winners! Once you see your first ribbon, you’ll be hooked! Give it a try and good luck!!!

*(By the way, my first rose show I won one 3rd place ribbon for Red Simplicity. I’ve gone on to win a few more awards since then.)*

### **Some Exhibiting Terms:**

**Exhibition Bloom:** *the optimum degree of beauty of a rose. For most roses, such as hybrid teas, miniatures, some floribundas, classic exhibition form is 1/2 - 2/3 open, symmetrically spiraled petals viewed from the top and triangular when viewed from the side, tight center petals not revealing any stamens. For single roses (Dainty Bess, Altissimo, Playgirl, etc.), the bloom is fully open with brightly-colored (not brown) stamens showing. For David Austin-style shrubs and OGRs, the bloom will be almost fully open.*

**Open bloom:** *fully opened bloom (for a variety that has an classic exhibition form), stamens showing. Stamens should be fresh, either bright yellow or red. Petals should be pulled back so that you can see the stamens clearly.*

**spray:** *two (although three or more looks better) or more blooms (not buds) on one stem. Symmetry is important from the top and the side. Blooms can be differing degrees of openness.*

**novice:** *an exhibitor who has not won a blue ribbon in an ARS rose show.*