

A ROOTIN' TOOTIN'

building a better

BY BEVERLY ROSE HOPPER

EMERITUS HORTICULTURE JUDGE AND MASTER ROSARIAN

AFTER ALMOST DISBANDING in the aftermath of Covid, the Mother Lode Rose Society (MLRS) has regrown into a vibrant group. The key for success has been following the wise advice the late and great Ed Griffiths (former National Chair of ARS Judges) shared with me decades ago for planning events: "Make it educational and entertaining."

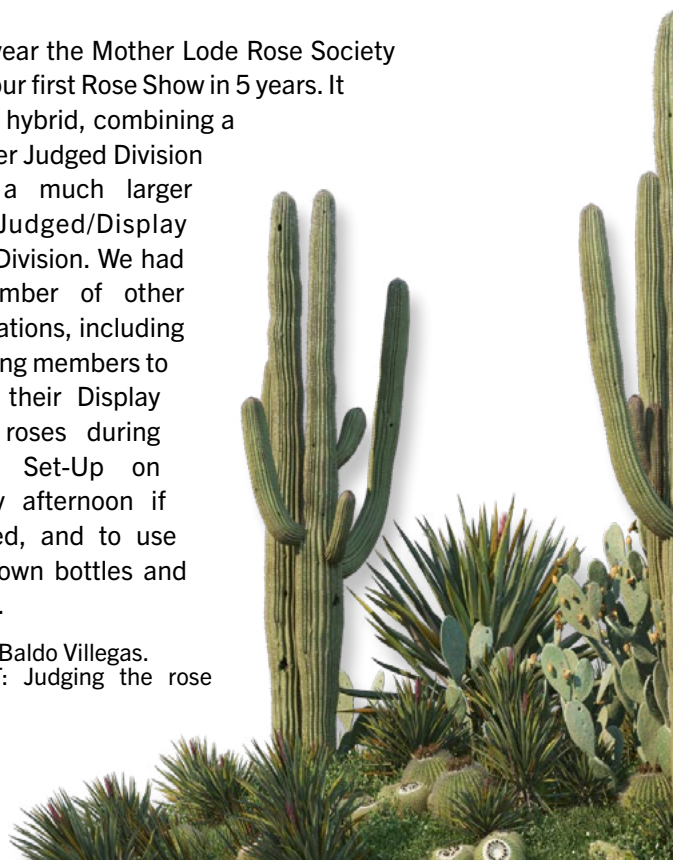
The root word of society is social. To be social means engaging people. It means changing with the times to keep things fresh and interesting. I've been a member

of the American Rose Society for 40 years, and too often groups wither because they keep doing things the same old way. This isn't to say "tried and true" isn't good. Many things that are old are classic. However, there's no question the vast majority of people growing roses today have different goals than we did 20, 30 years ago. Certainly, everyone still wants to grow good roses, and passion for roses is eternal. Yet most people today do not spray, are not interested in all the crazy things we did years ago as hard-core exhibitors. And a lot of people, especially newer members, do NOT want to be judged.

The point of a Rose Show is to share our love of roses with others. Times change, and so should our Rose Shows.

Last year the Mother Lode Rose Society held our first Rose Show in 5 years. It was a hybrid, combining a smaller Judged Division with a much larger Non-Judged/Display Only Division. We had a number of other innovations, including allowing members to enter their Display Only roses during Show Set-Up on Friday afternoon if desired, and to use their own bottles and vases.

LEFT: Baldo Villegas.
RIGHT: Judging the rose show.



GOOD TIME

Rose Show

Instead of kicking out everybody out of the Rose Show for judging, the show opened to the public Saturday morning at 10 AM when entries closed. Allowing exhibitors, members and the public to view the show when the roses were at their freshest worked out just fine.

Mother Lode loves a theme, and as we were celebrating rebuilding our society the theme was "Under Construction." The theme was incorporated throughout the show with festive construction type decorations and exhibitors and judges were invited to come in construction type apparel. It was a huge success.

This year we decided to do it again with a few additional improvements. The theme was "Rootin' Tootin' Roses" with western decorations including hay bales, horsey stuff, and cowboy hats. Breakfast was complimentary for judges, exhibitors, members and guests. MLRS President Martin Hopper cooked up Johnnycakes in the "Chuckwagon" and for lunch members brought an assortment of soups and stews in crockpots for a complimentary Soup Bar. For desserts more western type goodies such as fruit cobblers were served for all in attendance. Nobody went away hungry, and as one person joked, "They should have worn their stretchy pants."

Having a combined Judged and Non-Judged show was once again very popular. It attracted outside exhibitors who enjoy the opportunity to compete for the top prizes of Queen, etc., in the Judged Division,

while also offering a Non-Judged Division meant many members could "share" their roses without having to "show" roses. In the Non-Judged Division, we also allowed up to three stems per vase which meant more roses and a more colorful show.





What about ribbons vs dots? Many societies reverted to dots to save costs, and because old-timers don't really care about ribbons anymore. The thing is, newer members do

care. Those ribbons mean a lot, and awarding ribbons (even if a society just opts for blues) encourages and excites new exhibitors. Mother Lode uses official ARS ribbons in the Judged class for that reason. But what about the Non-Judged classes? Even though much of the MLRS Show in Horticulture, Arrangements and Photography is not judged, we recognize the importance of acknowledging effort and excellence. For that reason, our judges are each given a stack of blue "Award of Excellence" ribbons (available on Amazon) to bestow on any entry in the Non-Judged classes they feel deserving of special recognition. It's an easy way to make the show more inclusive and exciting for all levels.

Once again this year we opened the Rose Show (and the Rose Sale) to the public at 10 AM rather than waiting until judging was completed. This surprised those who are more familiar with the old-style of practically sealing the doors and not allowing anyone inside until hours later. Instead of a vibe which shuts people out, we welcomed exhibitors, members and the public to view the roses while they were at their freshest. It's a nice reward for those who labor to bring in roses for all to enjoy. In addition, as at our show the public votes for



Most Fragrant, Best Arrangement, and Best Photograph, it provides plenty of time to view the show and pick their favorites.

As the Arrangement Division was Non-Judged, it was low pressure which encouraged a range of creativity. Interestingly that resulted in over a dozen arrangement entries this year. The public voted for Best Arrangement and their choice was quite surprising, a whimsical arrangement made by a novice that broke all the "rules" entitled "Woody's Campfire." It was the public's favorite because it made them smile.

Rather than going off-site for the Judges Lunch (which often results in a show room that looks empty because everybody takes off) we once again set up a Judge's meeting area in the corner of the Auditorium. The Judge's Corral was festooned with western flair where judges, exhibitors, members and guests were invited to enjoy a complimentary breakfast and lunch. We also set up a few small tables with chairs here and there so people could enjoy a snack, meal or simply rest while surrounded by a roomful of roses.

As our membership continues to grow, so can our show. Next year we hope to feature in the Arrangement and Photography Division what we have offered in Horticulture - both Judged and Non-Judged classes. This would appeal to the traditionalists as well as those who just want to just have fun.

Speaking of fun, the comments we receive the most is our Show is "Relaxed and fun." This is what keeps people engaged and coming back.

Our Rose Show has also featured a special children's activity making rosy bouquets

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

OUTSTANDING JUDGE NCNH DISTRICT 2008

SILVER HONOR MEDAL 2005

MASTER ROSARIAN 2005

OUTSTANDING CONSULTING ROSARIAN 1998

**PAST PRESIDENT MOTHER LODGE ROSE SOCIETY
& SANTA CLARA COUNTY ROSE SOCIETY**

**CO-FOUNDER FRIENDS OF THE
SAN JOSE ROSE GARDEN**

**CURRENTLY RETIRED IN JACKSON CA ON 16
ACRES WITH 700 ROSES AND 40 CHICKENS.**

which has been popular with little kids, juniors and parents. It's important to engage the younger generation as they are the future of our rose societies.

During the Rose Show, Mother Lode also holds a Rose Sale. This year we had over 100 potted roses, including many rare, unusual and hard-to-get varieties. Almost all of the roses in the sale were propagated from cuttings by our members. This Rose Sale is one of our major fundraisers of the year, and has been very successful and popular with the public.

The model Mother Lode has developed for our Rose Show is one that could be emulated by other societies. It's easy, practical, affordable and engaging. People went home happy and excited about attending as one person called it, a "Rose Party." And what rose lover doesn't want to attend a rose party?

In fact, we're already excited about next year. Shiver me timbers, it's going to be a Pirate theme, including a treasure hunt for roses!

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Decorations for the rose show. Giddyup, Jacqui Nye and Debra Kinnick! Beverly Rose Hopper with Queen.