

TIPS ON ROSE SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP

Anne Paul, DSD Membership Chair

During this period when members are hard to attract and equally hard to keep, we all have to try harder and use methods maybe not used or thought of before. We, as members, and especially the Membership Chair of local rose societies, may have used some of these methods and hopefully there are many new ones you might want to try. Here are many important elements to grow rose society membership.

One of the elements I have found that has been effective is a tri-fold membership brochure. This contains information especially useful to anyone who would like to grow roses but doesn't know where to begin. The brochure has information about choosing a rose for your climate/geographical location, how to successfully plant the rose and information about maintaining the bush. You can't possibly tell the entire story of successfully growing a rose, but you can give them enough to get them started or peak their appetite. They will obviously need to come to your meeting to receive further information about growing roses. This brochure should list your meeting place and time, it should also list the name of you Membership Chair with an e-mail address and their phone number (very important). The most important thing a brochure gives is an application to join your rose society. Think carefully how you arrange your Membership Brochure before you have them printed. (HINT) Do not put membership application form on the back of any of the important information contained in the brochure. When they mail the brochure to join your Society they now have lost their information on getting starting with roses. Lastly, but most importantly, this Brochure should be written in such a way that it will attract new members. Mention the common love of roses of your membership, the fun you have at your meetings, learning new growing techniques, the latest roses released - make it a sound fun and enjoyable so they will want to join your Society.

Readily available sources of information on rose growing & care

Monthly Meetings with very open doors to the public

Advertising of upcoming meetings and events in:

Local Papers

On the radio

In all local garden centers

In other local businesses

To master gardeners groups

A website with easy to find membership information (Today a major source of new members)

Programs to local garden clubs and master gardener groups

Educational Workshops in concert with Farmers' Markets or other civic events

An aggressive Membership Team

Brief talks at public events

Information tables at Farmers' Markets and other community events

Get current members to bring a friend who might be an interested rose grower

Comb ARS membership lists for potential local members (Work with District Membership Chair to get the information).

Recruit current members to spread the word

Build a list of potential members from public events and send them periodic information and a newsletter occasionally. Mail next event information monthly.

To keep members:

Offer Programs that meet the needs of experienced and new growers

Offer occasional forums or workshops for newer members to keep them active or help them catch up with the more experienced growers.

Offer advanced workshops on rose care, rose exhibition, arranging, etc.

Make sure each new member has a big brother/sister to encourage, get them connected, etc.

Use a smiley face on the badges of all first year members.

Remind experienced members that the way to spread the load of work is by helping new members get comfortable.

Membership Chair develops a check list to talk with new members every month or two "Are we meeting your needs? If not what can we do to correct it.

Membership Chair follows up on every member not seen in the last two months.

Make sure new members start participating by being on non-technical committees e.g. Hospitality.

Societies need a social program to get old and new members together –allow them to mix.

Once a quarter the Membership Chair should hold a meeting with all "Resource Chairs" such as Newsletter Editor, Webmaster, Program Chair and Hospitality Chair to talk about how to best meet needs of both new and experienced members through the important resources.

No matter what your position is in your Society, make it your mission to help bring new members into your Society then -

Help to keep them active

Talk and listen - talk to new members, make them feel welcome and find out what they would like to learn, what suggestions they might have.

Always keep an open mind and an open ear. Listen for ideas!

If you have ideas you would like to share, send them to me and I will pass them on in the next Bulletin.

Most of us have in our childhood memory a story relating to roses. Help others to bring out those pleasant memories and remind them they could give someone a new pleasant memory to look back on. Smiles and roses go together very naturally.

Anne