

Horticultural excellence – excerpt from article by Dr. Satish Prahbu

What is it? One frequently hears reference to "Horticultural Excellence" while judging exhibits in a rose show. Briefly, the following constitute horticultural excellence.

- A straight stem, holding the bloom up proudly- a stem that says, "Look at Me!"
- Foliage to compliment the stem, dark green in color, thick and rich in substance (you don't often hear of foliage, but when you see one, you will know it) The individual leaflets large, without appearing
- No sign of any disease or insect damage, nor any signs of any cultural deficiency. For example, you long, strong stems with big leaves that are chlorotic or affected by mosaic virus.
- An outstanding bloom, that has excellent form, color typical of the variety, or better, petals equal to than what is typical of the variety, great substance, without any insect or other damage from the elements, refrigeration and a perfect exhibition stage! There you have it.

If a rose has all the qualities described above, chances are greater than 99%, it will be the queen of the show that day. That is how some exhibitors go around the preparation area and decide with a great deal of accuracy which rose is going to be the queen. It is not very often that a rose does not emerge above all the rest to be the queen of the show. Ties in judging are not as common as I would expect, providing a rose like that at each show. And when one is present, even new exhibitors can recognize them.

Finally, some attention should be given to proper grooming of each specimen to attain the best form it can let us not try to create a center where there was none, nor add anything artificial which was not there in the first place, for that is neither allowed, nor thing to do. There are basically four things involved in grooming.

1. Cleaning the specimen-stem and foliage.
2. Removing blemished petals or leaves.
3. Trimming of damaged petals.
4. Moving and re-positioning some of the petals to get the best possible form.

Any extra energy should be devoted to GROWING good roses rather than GROOMING them. One of the ways of hurting a good bloom with poor exhibiting technique is to stage a bloom on too long or too short a stem (we go again! but let us save more on this for another time!) Also, it is possible to do excessive trimming of petals on an otherwise good rose to make it lose its varietal characteristics. If you groom you will have a well-groomed dog. But if you groom a potential queen, you might indeed win a queen. The best grooming artist can not groom a dog into a queen nor beat an outstanding specimen of horticultural excellence receiving minimal grooming!