



PLANNING: A PRIORITY WITH PURPOSE

By: Ted W. Mills, ARS Consulting Rosarian and Judge

"Plans alone are of no value but planning is indispensable" -- General Eisenhower

"The best laid plans of mice and men oft go awry." Most lovers of poetry have that phrase planted indelibly in their minds. It originated with the famous Scottish poet, Robert Burns. His summation still holds true. Shelves hold reams of well-laid plans that never experienced fruition. General Eisenhower was right on track in advising his officers that successful military operations depend on a high degree of planning. He knew that planning that is coupled with execution is the route to victory.

Let's relate planning to the science of growing roses. Blue-ribbon blooms do not evolve from teaching journals that remain in libraries unread. Reading and executing their contents is the key to successful rose growing.

Every accomplished rosarian has first exerted much effort in the planning process. Just as surely as night follows day a plan of action was established before the first shovel of soil was tilled. Good roses are simply not produced by happenstance. At least not for long. It is pure luck if it does occur. Planning and executing those plans makes it happen.

What are some of the specifics that rosarians must plan for in order to reap accomplishment? First, one must decide how involved he or she will become. In other words, what percent of waking hours will one be able and willing to spend in caring for roses. Over-indulgence will spell failure and financial budgets will be strained. Limited involvement will produce mediocre results. Reasonable involvement that fits the rosarian's time frame and pocketbook will more likely produce success and enjoyment. Concerted planning in this preliminary stage is very important.

During my banking career it was normal policy to conduct planning operations. There was profit planning, estate planning, and marketing strategy, to name only a few sessions. Planning was simply a must throughout the organization. Without it the firm knew its future would not be assured. It is no different if the rosarian wants to master the art of rose growing. He or she must give serious thought to what produces blue-ribbon specimens in the garden. Once the decision is made to grow award-winning blooms, a plan of action must be adopted and carried out.

Rose growing should be a family affair and joint efforts will certainly produce better results. If feasible, encourage the spouse to join in the hobby. This usually makes the activity more enjoyable. The recognition and rewards are shared and the limelight of the winner's circle becomes brighter for both. By all means, utilize the spouse in the planning operation. Enlist other family members to participate.

As planning begins, where should one start once the degree of involvement is decided? Of course there are several items that bear mentioning. But as the planning progresses be sure to record what is to be done. In other words, prepare a roadmap that spells the direction the operation must go to be successful. When to plant, which plants are included, where is the planting site, what fertilizers ensure vigorous growth, how should pruning be done, what about curtailing disease and insects, how does one cope with severe weather conditions, what about irrigation -- all of these and

more are to be in the planning process.

One thing is certain. Just as surely as successful house management requires budgeting, growing roses to award-winning status also requires budgetary action. Financing this hobby often encounters an upward spiral. Then, too, management of one's time in this horticultural activity is equally important. Just how many hours can be expended wisely in the rose garden? These things are two of the primary reasons for deciding how large the involvement is to be. This phase of planning is essential and setting a limit just may prevent over-indulgence that often leads to terminating the hobby altogether.

Mentioned in this article are various segments of rose growing. Planting, fertilizing, watering, and pruning made the list. There are several other things that contribute to good growing and the rosarian must plan for them with goals in mind. Is he or she satisfied with mediocrity or are they aiming for the top in this great hobby. If reaching the pinnacle is the object, plan for it with educated thought.

This brings me to a great benefit that stands available to all who truly love roses. It is the umbrella that covers every phase of this horticultural art. I am speaking of the American Rose Society, (ARS). Their mission is to promote the hobby with all diligence among its membership. Every non-ARS member who is in the planning process of growing roses should be aware of this great storehouse of knowledge and include membership in ARS in their plans. To do so is a forward step in realizing their dream of growing super roses. Volumes of helpful information await every member who contacts this national organization. The service is included in the membership fee. Many other helpful gestures on the part of ARS are established policy.

One may wonder why I am such a proponent of ARS membership. The answer is clear. It is the one organization that holds our membership together. Without its adopted guidelines our local rose societies would be "out to sea" with no rudder to ensure stability. Currently there is a strong need for increased membership which is the heart and soul of the organization. It is the dynamo that energizes the engine that keeps our hobby afloat. Plan to join and recruit others to become members of this national floral body.

In closing, remember General Eisenhower's words and include planning in your rose growing agenda. Just as with the General, victory will be yours -- not in a military sense -- but in the form of growing blue-ribbon roses.

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