

## **Advantage: Dry Wrap**

### **By Glenda Whitaker**

Having just watched the Olympics and the U. S. Open Tennis at the time of this writing, I have my mind on the word advantage. Would you like to have an advantage in the art of exhibiting roses? Then the art of dry wrap for your rose blooms may just be your answer. Rosarians like to expound on the great roses they had in their garden a week earlier that had bloomed out by show time. The dry wrap method, provides the potential to exhibit specimens cut two weeks or more before their use. If you have a special event such as a special graduation reception, the dry wrap method has the possibility of allowing you to store more roses, cut over a longer period, thus requiring less refrigerator space. Blooms should be cut in late afternoon or early morning. Late afternoon has the advantage of the rose having stored more sugar from the photosynthesis action of the day. Morning cut roses have more moisture content in the stem. Do not dry wrap a rose that has morning dew on it, for the rose will discolor and rot in the dry wrap. For morning cutting, wait until the dew has completely dried and the rose is still retaining the night's moisture within its stem. The degree of opening  $\frac{1}{4}$ ,  $\frac{1}{2}$ , or  $\frac{3}{4}$  stage is a matter of experimentation, realizing the bloom does not continue to open while in refrigeration, but the "reawakening" process may see some further opening of the rose, depending on how many petals the cultivar has. The more petals a bloom has, the slower it will open.

No conditioning of the stem in warm water prior to wrapping and storing is necessary. The wrapping is akin to wrapping Christmas presents, or in this case, wrapping a potential show winner! Basic materials include extra wide clear plastic refrigerator food wrap material that clings to whatever it touches. (extra width facilitates the wrapping procedure and eliminates splicing pieces together). Cut the plastic wrap to extend above and below the length of specimen to allow fold over to seal the ends of the wrap. The material seals to itself. I usually lay down one long sheet on the counter, place the rose on top, then take another sheet of the plastic wrap and lay on top of the rose, sealing the sides and ends of the wrap to each other. Then I gently roll up the excess on the sides and ends to further protect the rose and give the "package" extra strength. Then a third piece of plastic cling can be wrapped around the sealed package to give extra insurance against air leakage. Extra air or moisture inside the enclosure is to be avoided so petal rot will not develop in the longer storage period. Some advocates of the dry wrap method go as far as using a Styrofoam cup around the bloom itself for further protection, but I have not found that to be that necessary.

After wrapping each specimen, refrigerate immediately; either vertically against one another with the bloom upright, or in horizontal layers. Be careful not to stack so high as to crush the blooms. The same temperatures used for wet storage are ideal for dry wrap (34–38 degrees F). Leave the roses wrapped until time for the "reawakening" --- anywhere from one to two hours before placing in an arrangement or exhibit. An important step is to re-cut the stem under water before plunging the specimens into deep warm water – very warm to your hand. The specimens will be wilted and lifeless at this point, and you may undoubtedly be thinking "How can anything come from this limp thing?" Relax and watch the life come back into the stem and bloom as the stem takes up the warm water, re-hydrating itself. The lifeless specimens will begin lifting their drooping heads in about 30 minutes and gradually take on the look of a potential winner.

Do not expect to have 100% success from this dry wrap method anymore than you have from conventional refrigeration where roses are kept in water.

Why go to all this trouble? If you have blooms that look great many days before you would ordinarily be cutting and putting the blooms in water and refrigeration, -- whether for a rose show or an upcoming event that you are wanting to have yourself or help someone else with, this can be your ticket to meeting your goal of a collection of beautiful roses. I have personally had success with this method saving the last roses of fall to use at our NRS Christmas banquet in bouquets and in our own Nashville Rose Shows and even in a national show.

For the St. Louis ARS National Convention several years ago, we took a chest full of dry wrap roses with ice-filled milk cartons in the chest to keep them cold. Upon arrival we re-cut the blooms in the hotel lavatory, plunged them into a deep bucket of warm water and entered horticulture and arrangement sections with the roses. We won many ribbons on the specimens and I won Princess of Arrangements with an all white bouquet of Garden Party roses, my first national arrangement award. What a thrill! Remember that the stage of opening at which one should cut the blooms from the garden in the first place should be geared to the number of petals a particular cultivar has and how quickly it may open. The fewer the petals, the faster it will open and move out of its exhibition stage of a high center.

Begin experimenting now and travel easy with some dry wrap roses to the Tenarky District Convention in Louisville, Kentucky Oct. 1-3. You just may come home with some ribbons and renewed faith in what some plastic cling wrap can do for saving and transporting your prized roses. Nothing ventured, nothing gained!