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Showing and Judging Minifloras

When it comes to showing and judging minifloras, there are really only two things you need to keep in mind—what the judging guidelines tell you...and what they don't.

First, let's focus on what the guidelines tell us. Before reading through the guidelines, I recommend that you make sure you're working from the most recent version. If you're like me and snapped up the new guidelines the minute they were available, your miniflora chapter is out of date. You should be working from the January 2005 version, which is available for download at the ARS website, http://www.ars.org/Judges/for_judges.htm.

Working from the correct guidelines version, we glean a decent amount of information from those four pages. For individual blooms, the six judging elements are the same as those for hybrid tea roses, so if you know what good form is for a hybrid tea, you know good form for a miniflora. Ditto for substance, color, stem and foliage, and balance and proportion.

The sixth element, size, is different in this version from the prior one. The original version of the guidelines called for the miniflora to be judged in a manner reminiscent of the criteria that Goldilocks used for evaluating porridge—not too big and not too small—just right for the variety. In the current version of the guidelines, they are explicit—bigger is better. So all other things being equal, the bigger rose wins.

For sprays, we read that the same judging criteria should be used as those used in evaluating floribunda sprays. After listing the certificates for which minifloras are eligible, that's the sum total of what the guidelines tell us.

Now, what are some things the guidelines don't tell us? As of this writing, there are slightly fewer than 400 minifloras registered, and they are increasing at a very fast pace. Miniatures are also registered at a fast pace and often shown by hybridizers and select growers within a short time of a variety being registered. How are exhibitors and judges to keep up with new registrations? And even more difficult, how do we keep up with changes in classifications? At a show, you may have two problems—being faced with an unfamiliar variety as well as not knowing whether it should be exhibited as a miniature or miniflora.

The key here lies in a set of two lists. One list is found on the ARS website for judges, and has the current month's miniflora list. The second is the up-to-the-minute registration site found at <http://64.78.40.53/irar/newregis.asp>. From this site, you can sort by name, AEN, hybridizer, color, or date. I recommend sorting by date to see what the newest registrations are but then printing out the list sorted by Approved Exhibition Name for ease in finding the variety you need when filling out entry tags or judging a specimen in the show.

With these two printouts, you can compare any rose in question to those on the list. If it isn't on the miniflora list, it is a miniature. It is imperative that you check this list immediately before a show, because registrations change. This is true for both exhibitors and judges. To illustrate the point, as I was preparing information on minifloras for a judging school, one of the varieties in question had changed registrations just ten days earlier from mini to miniflora. Another had changed just five days earlier!

If you are exhibiting a newly registered variety, I would recommend pointing this out to the chairman of judges and showing him or her proof of registration so that the judges can be informed about the rose and avoid any unnecessary confusion, or worse, disqualification.

As a judge or exhibitor, what should you bring to the show for reference material? Let me recommend your handbook, which will cover 80-90% of the minifloras you will need to know. The CRL may cover some, but the monthly list and new registrations listing referenced above are mandatory for having the most up to date information at a show. *Modern Roses* will, unfortunately, be hopelessly out of date until a new edition is published.

As a judge, never be embarrassed to consult with your fellow judges if there is a question about a rose's classification. In fairness to the exhibitors, we owe it to them to render a fair verdict on their entries and not disqualify as misclassified something that is really placed properly.

One of the axioms of judging is that "you have to grow them to know them." With the pace of miniflora introductions, it is impractical if not downright impossible,

to do this for all the new introductions. While I try very hard to keep up with the highest potential new roses, I can't possibly afford the space, money, and effort to grow them all, so I have to be selective. That doesn't mean, however, that others won't be growing the varieties I didn't choose. So I still need to be as familiar with those as I can be, as a competitor and as an evaluator.

One way to learn about these is to check out the varieties grown locally in your area. But chances are if you're reading this that yours is the garden everyone will be visiting to check out the newest cultivars! In lieu of seeing the actual roses, the next best way to learn about the newest varieties is to check out their photographs. Sites like Rosemania, Almost Heaven, Bridges' Roses, Johnny Becnel, Nor East, and Two Sisters have many of the most recent miniature and miniflora photographs on their sites.

You can also see photos on helpme-find.com, or The Rosarian's Corner. These sources are especially good to see what a rose looks like growing in someone's garden instead of the "glamour shot" photos in many catalogs and web sites. Keep in mind that roses grow differently in the diverse regions of the country and may look substantially different on the coast from how they do in the midwest or southeast. But in the absence of the experience of growing a plant, a photograph may be the next best thing you can have to become familiar with a variety.

Now that we exhibitors are armed with our handbook and lists, we should never have a miniature or miniflora disqualified again for being misclassified. And as judges, if we carry these lists and a mental picture of the newest varieties, we won't improperly disqualify minifloras for that reason. This certainly won't eliminate all the grumbling about how shows are judged, but it can at least eliminate an avoidable source of mistakes, and that's a big step toward a fair and educational rose show.

Mini and Miniflora Quiz

Now that you're armed with your handbook and lists, it's quiz time. Here are several roses that you should identify as "miniature" or "miniflora" in the space provided. Collaboration with your fellow rosarians is allowed and in fact encouraged. This is an open book, open notes, and open neighbor exam. Good luck!

Identify each of the following as a miniature or miniflora rose:

1) Ashton

Miniature Miniflora



2) Bee's Knees

Miniature Miniflora



3) Best of '04

Miniature Miniflora



4) Butter Cream

Miniature Miniflora



5) Charismatic

Miniature Miniflora



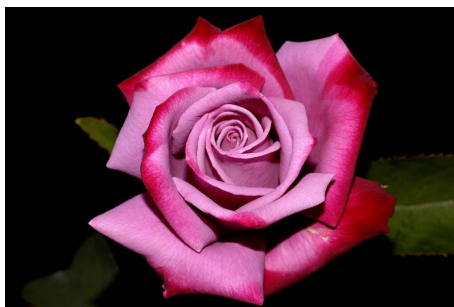
6) Conundrum

Miniature Miniflora



7) Dr. John Dickman

Miniature Miniflora



8) Dr. Troy Garrett

Miniature Miniflora



9) Foolish Pleasure

Miniature Miniflora



10) Louisville Lady

Miniature Miniflora



11) Memphis King

Miniature Miniflora



12) Memphis Magic

Miniature Miniflora



16) Summer Night

Miniature Miniflora



13) Memphis Music

Miniature Miniflora



17) Whirlaway.

Miniature Miniflora



14) Nancy Jean

Miniature Miniflora



15) Soroptimist International

Miniature Miniflora



Answers: Bee's Knees, Best of '04, Nancy Jean, and Soroptimist International are miniatures. The rest are minifloras as of this writing, but this is subject to change! Check the up to date lists to be sure.