

Responsible, Organic, Simple & Earth-Friendly

A Brand New Rose Show Category



by Pamela
Greenwald

P.O. Box 1106

Alachua, Florida 32616

gardenangel22@gmail.
com

"There is nothing magical or mysterious about my methods, and what I have learned to do others can learn to do, and what I have started others can finish, and what I have learned about the laws of Nature can be applied by others and added to by others, if only they will waken to the possibilities that exist."

Luther Burbank

The following is a first hand account by Anne Fleming detailing a new idea on the Rose Show circuit — adding a new category entitled "Organically Grown Rose". She explains the qualifications as well as the reasoning behind the leniency in the title, as only 10 percent use of organic methods are required to enter a rose into this category. When I hear the term 'organic' in relation to rose-growing, I think of many things, such as no spraying with harmful chemical fungicides or pesticides, using organic amendments such as cottonseed meal, alfalfa meal, kelp, worm castings, liquid seaweed, fish emulsion, mulches, use of neem oil and beneficial insects and soil microbes. I believe and hope that the use of the "O" word alone will inspire rosarians to enter roses from their gardens that are truly grown without synthetic chemical sprays or fertilizers in order to show that it can be done and in fact is done all over the country with huge success. Although I understand the introductory use of the "10 percent rule" in order to be inclusive, it is my opinion that a "75 percent rule" could be just as inclusive and would no doubt be more accurate when describing a rose that has been grown organically. This is probably the first

time something of this nature has been attempted and the members of this rose society are commended for their pioneering spirit and even more importantly their taking a stand for the environment.

On Saturday, May 18, 2013, the Virginia Peninsula Rose Society held its 65th annual rose show at the Patrick Henry Mall. In celebration of this incredible milestone our society chose to introduce a new section in the Horticultural Division, Specimen Rose Sections. Section 16 in the program is in acknowledgement of the future of rose cultivation and a hope that our rose society will be here in another 65 years to see the full blossom of the changes being sown in our small corner of the horticultural world. Our new category reads,

"Section 16 Organically Grown Rose. One rose of any type, grown using at least one organic technique. Entry card should explain organic technique."

Roses entered in this section were judged according to the generally accepted standards for each specimen. The only additional requirement, was that entrants write on the entry tag, at least one organic technique used to produce the rose specimen. The trophy winner of this new section, was Elizabeth Mangino of Virginia Beach, VA, with her entry 'Doctor Robert Korn's'; techniques used were compost and no fungicides or insecticides. One of our speakers, who chose to remain anonymous donated \$50.00 to the Virginia Peninsula Rose Society on the condition that we create a new



Left to right: ??? Below: ???

photos courtesy Anne Fleming

section for organically grown roses. Section 16 was born.

The driving idea behind this approach, to judging organically produced roses, is what I like to call the "10 Percent Method." As it was explained to me the first time I heard it, is that people are adverse to change. Rose people are especially adverse to change if their roses routinely "make the table." In recent years, many of the sprays, fertilizers, etc., have been taken off the market because they have been found to be neurotoxins and/or carcinogens. This has forced many rosarians to change products whether they wanted to or not. This sent longtime rosarians scrambling for new products and techniques that reliably produce prize winning blooms. In the process of filling this product void, many rose people inadvertently adopted techniques such as mulching, use of compost, companion planting and selection of hardier roses. Perhaps they still use chemicals, however, if someone were to evaluate their entire rose growing routine, most if not all rose growers would find that their rose growing routine was composed of at least 10 percent organic technique. The "Organically Grown Rose" section causes people to pause and think about the methods they use to produce roses. This is a good start.

This new section caused quite a stir among the judges at our show. Apparently, the introduction of an organically grown rose section has been debated at various levels: local, district and national for quite some time. I have seen an "earth friendly" non-judged, exhibition section; an "Earth-Kind" rose section that was judged but no organic category or section. Talking to more



people I found that the single most powerful stumbling block to an "Organically Grown Rose" section was semantics. Some people preferred "earth friendly," others preferred "sustainable," while others did prefer "organic," but placed so many requirements for it, that "organic" came to mean a lifestyle rather than a collection of techniques to be used to grow roses.

For me, "organic" means recognizing that whatever



Left to right: ???

plant or crop that we grow is merely one of countless others that are growing on our planet. "Organic" means using care not to dramatically interfere with the plants, animals and organisms that populate the earth. Applying the "10 percent rule," if a lot of people who have gardens, farms or commercial nurseries were to use just one organic growing technique in the creation of their product, it would help. By not requiring people to adopt an "organic lifestyle" in order to enter Section 16, we have created a pathway for people to learn about organic techniques to grow roses. If they choose to adopt one of the many organic techniques out there, then their 10 percent contribution added to all the others, makes a powerful impact on our world.

For those folks who say, "the proofs in the pudding," let me say, I won six blue ribbons in the show. One of those blue ribbons was in section one, hybrid teas and grandifloras, for 'Queen Elizabeth'. I made it to the last round of voting which would determine the court. In addition, I won three trophies. One was for Best OGR prior to 1867, another was for the "Three Old Garden Roses Challenge," and finally, I won the silver Williams

Handicap Trophy for obtaining the highest percentage score based on the number of points scored in relation to the number of rose plants grown. All of these awards were earned with roses grown using multiple organic techniques. My answer to those who are on the fence, I've done it and so can you. To folks who are on the fence about using the term "organic," I say set the entry bar low, make the category inclusive rather than exclusive and most of all, use it as a platform for educating the general public as well as rose growers.

Anne Fleming

