

A NEW APPROACH to MEMBERSHIP RECRUITMENT

invited to host these clinics, as we called them, with the following incentives being proposed:

by Jeff Wyckoff, Past President of the Seattle Rose Society

The mission of the American Rose Society and its affiliated local rose societies is education, but of course it helps to have some members to educate. Various schemes for attracting and retaining membership have been tried over the years, with some having good success. Nonetheless, the Seattle Rose Society decided to try something new and different (at least for us) this year. This consisted of two concepts: 1) teaching rose care and culture rather than just answering questions about it, and; 2) involving local nurseries and garden centers in the package.

For the first of these, it was decided to offer four hour-long classes on important aspects of rose growing, in this order: pruning, variety selection, planting/feeding/fertilizing, and disease and insect control. These began at 10a.m. and lasted until 3p.m., with an hour lunch break. Since pruning is the first thing on everyone's mind in February and March, this became the starting point.

Local nurseries were

• The inventory lists of each nursery's rose offerings were collected in advance of the seminar. Two-to-three dozen of these that were considered best for the Pacific Northwest were selected for recommendation at the 11am selection presentation. A Power Point presentation was prepared of images of said varieties, with commentary provided by the presenter and/or on the slide itself. We encouraged attendees to shop for roses during the lunch break, when the recommendations would be fresh in their minds.

• For the two afternoon sessions, we went through the nursery's inventory of fertilizers, insecticides, fungicides and other products, both organic and chemical, that we could recommend. Samples were then displayed during the presentations. Other rose related products – secateurs, sprayers, etc. were also mentioned during the classes, with an eye toward products in the host nursery.

Our sales pitch to those people attending the presentations included:

- A Seattle Rose Society one-year membership at half price, available only that day. We brought along several color copies of our bulletin and passed them around the audience to acquaint with this publication.
- A free four-month trial membership in the American Rose Society, which is available to all new members of an affiliated society.
- A copy of the ARS booklet *Creating a Beautiful Rose Garden*
- Announcing that, as a local society member, they could purchase #1 grade roses through the SRS from certain wholesale nurseries, as well as 50 lb bags of 15-10-10 fertilizer, at bargain prices.

In order to keep interest up during the day, four door prizes were given away at each of the four presentations. These consisted of two items donated by the host nursery and two American Rose magazines. We obtained overstock copies from ARS HQ for only the cost of shipping, and



before the door prize drawings would pass these around the audience to acquaint them with the prime feature of ARS membership. For those who chose not to take advantage of this offer, we also had color copies of the Rose and You available for viewing, and enrolled ARS e-members at every session.

Promotion for the clinics was shared between the Seattle Rose Society and the nurseries; we worked with the major Seattle newspaper and the local gardening guru, and the nurseries used their websites and customer bulletins. Next year we plan on producing an attractive one-page sheet to send to each of them for their promotions.

After five clinics, we have enrolled 37 SRS and ARS trial members. The reception and cooperation from the host nurseries has been very good, and all wanted us to do a similar clinic for them next year. We have asked each of them to provide a short testimonial of their experience that we can use to attract more nurseries to participate in the future. Support from SRS members has also been very good. Twenty classes were covered by seven speakers, with another half-dozen members staffing information tables.

It took some effort and commitment from our members, but it really worked, and we enjoyed doing it. We created new relationships and win-win situations the nurseries have enhanced sales, the attendees gain knowledge, and the Seattle Rose Society and the American Rose Society gain new members. In the end, we had positive results and we're proud that our efforts and ideas paid off. We want to share it with you, because if we can do it, you can do it.

OPPOSITE TOP: Vice President Judy Redmond talking on pruning
OPPOSITE BOTTOM: Past President Faith Gant speaking on disease and insect control