



Rose Education Programs: The Keys to Attracting and Keeping Active Local Rose Society Members

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There are a lot of people in your area who love roses. They want to know how to care for the roses they have, and how to make their roses as big and beautiful as the pictures on the tags. Everyone who loves roses also enjoys discussing roses and rose care with other rose lovers.

These rose enthusiasts search the internet to find rose care information, then luckily find a rose society nearby. Facebook pages invite them to attend a meeting. They take a chance to attend a meeting with a group of strangers. What will they find?

Hopefully, not only will they be recognized as a "new person" and welcomed by many friendly rose society members, but also feel that they are among new friends who are happy to help a "new person" learn more about roses. Now all it takes to know that they are really in the right place is for them to experience an interesting rose care program. They will be assured that they want to be a part of a rose society when they witness members asking questions and hearing experienced rosarians discussing a variety of answers.

What attracts new members and keeps experienced rosarians coming back to local rose society meetings? Interesting and educational rose care programs attract and retain members, as well as the simple comfort of being in a happy atmosphere with friends who also care about roses.

The number one concern among local rose society presidents is that of creating an environment with engaging educational programs, events, hands-on activities and enthusiastic members, who want to be involved in those activities. With that goal in mind ARS President Diane Sommers requested that the ARS Local Rose Society Advisory Committee be organized. The advisory committee is composed of current and former rose society presidents representing the 18 ARS districts.

By researching best practices in active and thriving local societies across the country and beyond, the advisory committee has compiled successful methods of promoting and maintaining membership, ideas for local fundraising, suggestions for member recognition and appreciation, plus an extensive list of programs, activities, and events.

In December 2022, the advisory committee met virtually via Zoom, with 120 local rose society current and incoming presidents. This initial meeting was meant to be a bridge of communication between local society presidents and the ARS Local Rose Society Advisory Committee. Quarterly virtual meetings are being scheduled to provide local society leaders with continued ideas and new inspiration. The first meeting provided the *Program Resource Guide*, an extensive list of programs, activities and program resources used by active rose societies. Also, suggestions were set forth for recognizing and showing appreciation to loyal and active members.

As the ARS website is being redesigned, these resources and information will be available for review and download. Rose society leaders will be invited to attend future virtual meetings with the ARS Local Rose Society Advisory Committee.

Local presidents have also been provided with the *Program Resource Guide*, an extensive list of informative programs, fun and interesting activities plus program resources meant to inspire local leaders to customize the suggestions and ideas to fit their particular group.

The ARS Local Advisory Program Committee has recommended that each local rose society create a list of available speakers from within their society, the community, and the district. Organizing the list of speaker's names, contact information, and program topics would create a *Speakers Directory*. Not only could this *Speakers Directory* would be used by the current president and program chair, but also then be inherited by their successors. Thus, speaker information would continuously be added or revised to update the directory each year.

It was also suggested that rose societies in the district might combine their *Speakers Directory* to create a *District Speaker Directory*. Perhaps individual rose societies in the district might then discover that they are willing to exchange speakers from one society to another or at least recognize similar sources in their community. The idea of a *District Speaker Directory* might lead to the appointment of a new district committee chair responsible for distributing the annually updated *District Speaker Directory* to each local rose society.

Once a speakers' directory is created, local and districts leaders may recognize the helpfulness of creating a *Programs and Events Guide*. Each incoming president and program chair could receive the list and simple description of programs, demonstrations, tours, fund raising events, interesting topics, fun activities used in years past. Looking over a list of past programs and activities could spark a fresh idea perfect for the current program calendar. Having the opportunity to view a combined list of programs and ideas in a *District Programs and Event Guide* would be even more helpful.

The Advisory Committee also recommended that local presidents working with the Program Chair and Program Committee create a yearly *Program Calendar*, including a mixture of educational programs, interesting demonstrations and tours, plus fun activities meant to be enjoyed with rose friends.

The *Program Resource Guide* created by the ARS Local Rose Society Advisory Program Committee lists over 90 ideas and descriptions for programs, events, demonstrations, sources for speakers plus suggestions and examples for building a program calendar. These resources and information will soon be available for review and download on the ARS website.

Quarterly virtual meetings are being scheduled to provide local society leaders with ideas and suggestions for attracting new members, engaging current members, fund raising activities, plus topics and sources for interesting programs. The second virtual meeting for the ARS Local Rose Society Advisory Committee with rose society presidents and leaders will be scheduled in the near future. Leaders from your rose society will be invited and encouraged to attend!