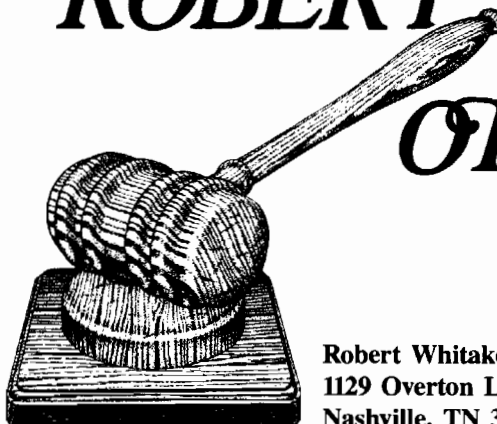




ROBERT'S RULES OF ROSES



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IDENTIFYING THE IDEAL CONSULTING ROSARIAN

After a recent Consulting Rosarian Seminar in Tucson, Arizona, at the Pacific Southwest Convention, I was asked to reproduce my comments on "Identifying the Ideal Consulting Rosarian" which I gave as a part of the program. I have salvaged my notes from all the unexpected but welcome rain we had during portions of our garden tour, dried them out, and here they are for your files. Many of us on the garden tour enjoyed the beautiful roses as we dodged the cascade of rain showers, and all had to be photographed in front of the 10' x 10' screen wall of red miniature roses from a plant of *Red Cascade* in the Ide garden. Incidentally, Lou Pavlovich of the Rose Society of Tucson has edited a rose-growing manual for that area titled "Blast Furnace Rose Gardening." Compiled from all their members' writing contributions, it is an excellent publication.

How do we go about finding and identifying the ideal Consulting Rosarian? The most frequent complaints from districts back to the National Committee on Consulting Rosarians deal with the following: "They won't help anymore! They are not active in the district! Does Life Consulting Rosarian mean rigor mortis has set in?" The new guidelines were developed to help organize this selection process, but we still have to use some identifying characteristics to find candidates for Consulting Rosarian. I am going to give you my list of ten.

1. **The ideal Consulting Rosarian is a valuable asset to his or her local society, the district organization, and the ARS** because that person is always on the job promoting each. Because of their value, we like to describe these people as diamonds. How do these people develop this characteristic? In the same way a diamond is developed — from a piece of coal that has just stuck to the job. They both are pure carbon, but oh, what a difference!

Cliff Cleage, our local CR coordinator of the Nashville Rose Society, writes each new member, sending along information on one of our CR's, to provide the member with one specific individual who will answer his questions, visit his garden, and help him with his rose-growing problems.

2. **The ideal CR must be willing to work.** He or she volunteers to help at shows, care for public rose gardens, and talk to interested groups. He has a hands-on attitude about rose

growing. Too many of us have an attitude of realizing hard work never killed anyone, but why take the chance!

3. **The ideal CR is knowledgeable as to the growth and characteristics of both old and new rose cultivars.** He can tell us that *Touch of Class* is great, *Sunsprite* is an excellent landscape yellow floribunda, and what the scoop is on the new AARS winners. We all love to read and peruse rose catalogs but wonder about the descriptions. This individual knows how to read between the lies — I mean lines.

4. **The ideal CR understands the significance of his or her appointment** and places it in the right perspective. It is a call to service, not just a badge of honor. His or her byword is "It's nice to be important, but it's more important to be nice." We don't want to be so full of hot air we float up to the clouds, out of reach and contact with those who need our help.

5. **The ideal CR recognizes there is a large chasm between advice and help.** Lip service is just not as effective as getting your hands into a rose problem. The person we are looking for knows how to bridge the gap between advice and help. When we respond to a telephone call from a novice rose grower whose leaves are falling off with, "I would like to come over, but my rose garden needs spraying; just give me a word picture," we become an insulting rosarian instead of a consulting rosarian.

6. **The ideal CR must be a good diplomat** to get his message across. How you say it is as important as what you say. Expressions like, "You dumbhead! I told you putting too many chemicals together would burn your foliage!" may be truthful but can also discourage the novice into thinking rose growing is too complicated. What we are after is repeat business. Harry Truman, who was known for his bluntness, was quoted as saying, "I never gave anyone H---. I just told the truth and they thought it was H---." Winston Churchill also had his run-ins with tact. It is reported that Lady Astor became so irritated with his demeanor at a tea party as she served him tea that she remarked, "If I were your wife, I would put poison in this cup." Whereupon Winston remarked, "Madam, if your were my wife, I would drink it." When we dose out medicine, let's put a spoonful of sugar in it.

7. **The ideal CR values his time and uses it well.** It is one resource we cannot replenish. "Use it or lose it" is a common expression that fits our hobby well. Those particular occasions

where a friend or acquaintance expresses an interest in learning something about rose culture are windows of opportunity which many only open one time. Our attitudes about time can be very diverse. My father-in-law who is 95 has as his goal living in three centuries — that means making it to 106 years (some that age might rebuke you for buying them green bananas!)

8. **The ideal CR is an optimist** and makes everyone around him optimistic. He is the one to say, “The spring frosts will miss us this year,” and if they don’t, his response will be, “Look how quickly they recovered!” We have all heard the saying that one rotten apple can spoil the whole barrel. If we knock our local society, the district organization, or ARS, what support can we hope to develop among others? The corollary to this is that one optimistic CR can motivate a local society to accomplish anything it sets its mind to do, whether it be meeting a Project 80’s pledge, recruiting new members, or having an AARS test garden in your area. Seventy-five percent of any project is believing and twenty-five percent is doing. This kind of person in your rose society is just like a tea kettle — it is going to sing even though it is up to its nose in hot water!

9. **The ideal CR is a leader, not a boss.** The boss drives his workers, the leader coaches them. The boss depends on authority, the leader on good will. The boss inspires fear, the leader enthusiasm. The boss says “I,” the leader, “We.” The boss fixes the blame, the leader fixes the problem. And finally, the boss says “go,” and the leader “let’s go.”

10. The last trait — **The ideal CR is innovative in his rose**

growing and consulting. He finds a new solution to a difficult problem — not one solution to all problems. If climbers are difficult to grow in the area and someone wants to grow them, he will find the right microclimate, location, and the most adaptable cultivars, and ways to retain moisture and counteract alkalinity in soil and water.

One of the Texas Aggie stories circulating illustrates the reverse of an innovative CR very well. A city slicker turned farmer bought some young chicks for Easter to raise his own eggs. He subsequently wrote a letter to the Texas A & M Extension Service asking for advice after reporting that the chicks had all died. His letter reported he had followed all the instructions for planting them in order to grow eggs by placing them in the ground head down and feet up in the air. The response he received was brief. “We are not certain. Please send a soil sample.”

If we can each live up to a few of these ten characteristics, all our rose friends will be the beneficiaries. Bill Meredith of the Memphis Rose Society, who is an accomplished exhibitor of roses, has given these thoughts a different twist and wanted exhibitors to take on a new project. Bill has been working with some of his society’s younger members in exhibiting experience and acting as their mentor in showing roses. His view is that we must raise a new crop of exhibitors by giving some of our time and experience if our rose shows are to remain a place for the beauty of the rose. Like “Hello Dolly” said, rose exhibiting expertise is like manure. It only works if you spread it around! Of course, in Texas they would also recommend a soil sample!