



## How - *Adrenaline!*

## Why - *The Rose!*

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How and why would any “normal” person sit up all night, listen to classical music, laugh with friends and create 10- 15 rose arrangements? The same reason someone would wake up at 3 AM, drive 50 miles and spend the next 6 hours putting Q-tips in blooms, place them in a vase, polish their foliage and use a cuticle scissors to remove a slight imperfection on a leaf three quarters of the way down the stem. And the reason is ‘We have great roses to show and we want them to look their best.’ I just happen to think that staging them with other roses and complimentary material and being able to look at them not only up close and personal but equally well if you are 4’11” or 6’6” has a distinct advantage over the other. I don’t think I will ever try to justify the “normal” part of the question, so I will just go to the “Why” and “How” part.

I don’t presume to answer the “Why” question for every person who only enters horticulture exhibits, I don’t understand the torture. But for arrangements, it’s easy. We do it because we love to look at collections of roses in all its many facets and stages set apart from other displays. And especially I will answer the question – “Why do I do it.?”

I do it because I have so many lovely visions of my roses that I just keep trying to think of new and better ways to have folks admire them. I have always described my arranging philosophy as “Framing the Rose.” I am most pleased when folks come up to my arrangements and say “look at the roses.” To me that says that I have displayed them in such a way as to make them be featured, and all other things, (container, background, wire stuff, bent twigs, etc.) enhance the roses and push them into your visual forefront. And probably the trickiest part of that is being able to be neutral about all the extra cute stuff that I might use in the display. That pretty well sums up the “Why.”

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The first part of "How", is adrenaline. Yup, I do it because I am excited, and I have candy and coffee and Pepsi, and music and I am having fun. That combination keeps me awake and enjoying the entire process. I had to learn the hard way to keep it fun, and not worry about the competition. I had to figure out what were the traps that I could fall into and what I should never do if I wanted my creations to be appreciated and enjoyed by others and possibly actually WIN.

In response to questions of How and Why I would do what I do (enter many arrangements and love every minute of it), I realize that I have learned how to avoid most of the negative traps and I want to share this with you. Most of them have been eliminated because I have chosen to insist on having fun. No matter what! This is fun and I am going to enjoy it.

I have found some simple but effective suggestions to pass on to anyone who would like to try them which could make them first enjoy the process, and ultimately, increase the chances of having a winner too.

First of all, Rose shows are not art shows, container shows, wire sculpture shows, nor early American homesteader's shows! There could be a rose show *highlighting roses in great art*, or a rose show *using unusual and creative containers*, a rose show *highlighting the malleable form of wire* or a rose show *highlighting early American household items*. Get it, not really that difficult. The arrangement that I win with, can have any and all of the above, but all those items



"A River Runs through It" Modern Stretch Design using "Unbridled" Roses by Nancy Redington. ARS Gold, Artist Rosette and Best in Show at 2010 All Mini National in Milwaukee WI.

are **secondary** to the importance of the rose. The arrangements that I win with, first draw you to the rose. As a small aside, whenever I observe the judges reviewing my arrangements, if I see them quickly look to my tag for the name(s) of the roses that I have used, I know I have a winner. (*Now remember, they are supposed to be checking the names of the roses, but the reaction is more of a "look at that beautiful rose! What is it!"*) The roses have already captured the heart and mind of the judge because I have not screwed up their beauty with a whole bunch of useless extras which compete for attention.

So, now we are up to the "How."

What is the first secret (not really) of doing well in Rose Shows? It is choosing the most beautiful blooms I have, and to feature them in my design. They need to be full of moisture (the chroma screams when fully hydrated), at their "MPPPB"(most perfect phase of possible beauty.) They are my Queens!

After I have selected the blooms, then I need to find the components that will most show off the particular varieties' color and form in the most appealing way. Blue reds seem to be the most difficult to show in arrangements in many rose shows. The lighting can be so fickle and they

need extra light to show off their beauty. Reds seem to do best with surrounds of various shades of green. To have them show off their form the best, it is most important to increase the reflective light around the bloom. That can be the transitional material, the background, and/or the placement in the designated space. Whatever I can do so you can see my blooms at their 'MPPPB'. Yellow and orange red blooms seem to be able to 'talk about themselves' better than most and have a larger variety of color surrounds that can enhance them. Yellow screams, "Look at me!" If I have enough clean, beautiful yellow roses, the ribbons will come my way. Whites, pinks, mauves are great almost anytime, and color blends especially show well in arrangements.

What can detract from the appreciation of the rose: the background color, which can muddy up the color of the rose; the size of the container which can make the blooms look too small or too big; too much other floral material and/or too many accessories that actually turn into features because the size is off (too big or takes up too much visual space); the color is too dominant (it stands out too much - it is the first thing your eye sees); the placement of components of the design draws your eye away from those Queens you are using. Any of these manmade errors hinder in the appreciation of the message you are sending.

Everything I put together needs to effectively use any other components in the design to support the roses' message (aka interpretation.) If the message is the full transition of the rose's life cycle (most often seen in traditional arrangements), I will have blooms from bud stage, with sepals up, to fully open blooms with glorious stamens announcing the ability to make a new generation. Depending on the 'season' the arrangement is referencing, you may even see hips (and although prominent - not mine.) And if the message is strong, I may choose to use only a few strong pieces to support the message of the strong Queen. This idea of strength usually fits into what we call a Modern design style.

For a long time, I really didn't like Modern arrangements and would resist any attempt to get me to exhibit that design style in a show. To me, they were modern sculptures (usually painted black) that someone threw a rose at and then called it an arrangement. And the judging at the time when I first started to do arrangements, seemed to reinforce that thought. We didn't have many ARS arrangement judges way back then and the value of a magnificent rose didn't seem to measure up to the value of a magnificent container from an expensive potter. Comments about the magnificent container or the piece of wood or the enormous metal construction would cause me to simmer a little. I would find myself commenting that this was not a sculpture show



"Curves" Traditional Line Mass Design using "Chattooga" Roses by Nancy Redington. ARS Bronze, Royalty Rosette at 2010 All Mini National in Milwaukee WI.



and what an awful representative of the most beautiful flower (the rose) the exhibitor had found in some old corner to use. I would look at these examples and think, why would anyone want to grow roses that looked like the poor wilted specimen in front of me. This was in the 70's through the early 90's. At that time, the whole concept of rose arranging was "what the little woman did with the leftovers, after the prospective Queens were groomed beyond reasonableness and placed firmly into that Eiffel tower vase" The leftovers were gathered together and were staged with too many accessories, to somehow tell a story or relay a theme. The blooms were almost inconsequential to the display. In fact, in those days there was considerable debate about the percentage of roses needed in an arrangement. More than 51 percent seemed to be the tipping point. And that was a rose arrangement.

Well those days are pretty much gone and fortunately we now have different guidelines where the Rose in all her forms is the star. So 'How and Why' would I do all this?. How is because I can. And Why is because I love beautiful things, I love my roses and I want to show them in a setting of other beautiful things called an arrangement. And because I want folks to know that there is not one event that I can think of where a collection of roses is not appropriate . . . I arrange to see if I can make the next one present the rose in even a more beautiful setting, which it always deserves.