



The American Rose Society
**GUIDELINES FOR
ROSE SOCIETY LEADERS**

Produced for ARS Affiliate Societies by the
ARS Local Society Relations Committee
and the
ARS Membership-Marketing Department
1999
REVISED 2008

III
**MARKETING AND
MEMBERSHIP
PROMOTION**

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Please make duplicates of forms as needed.
Leave originals in “Guidelines” for future reference.

AMERICAN ROSE SOCIETY HEADQUARTERS:

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***Membership:* WHERE DO WE GO FOR HELP?**

Recruiting new members and retaining existing members is a challenging task.

This section of the Guideline for Rose Society Leaders offers some ideas for gaining and retaining new members which have worked for others. The section will be supplemented from time to time. Society Leaders are also encouraged to read *ARS & You* for ideas and suggestions on local society membership issues and discussions on problem solving. *ARS & You* is a monthly e-publication from the Local Society Relations Committee.

***Membership:* SUPPORT NETWORK**

AMERICAN ROSE SOCIETY MARKETING AND MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

The ARS President appoints a national Marketing and Membership Chairperson, who in turn invites a small group of interested, informed, and creative persons to serve on the committee. The term of the committee is three years to run concurrently with the term of the ARS Officers and Directors.

The role of the ARS Marketing and Membership Committee is to work to increase membership; address issues of membership in the national organization, and to provide a network of assistance to serve members in our local affiliate societies.

The national committee will work with the ARS staff and the District Membership Representatives to share ideas, and to pass along information from the national Marketing and Membership Committee to the affiliate societies through their Society Membership Chairpersons.

DISTRICT MEMBERSHIP REPRESENTATIVES

Each District Director (there are 18) in the American Rose Society appoints a District Membership Representative who serves with the national Marketing and Membership Committee and who works with the membership chairman of each local rose society in the district. The term of the committee is three years to run concurrently with the term of the ARS Officers and Directors.

District Membership Representatives communicate frequently with the National Marketing and Membership Chairman and Committee. They participate in exchanges of ideas; pass along ideas from the national committee *to* the affiliate societies, and share ideas *from* the affiliate societies with the national committee.

The District Representatives are encouraged to provide articles for their district bulletin, and to provide programs on membership and membership issues at district meetings at least once per year.

District Representatives work with their District Directors to periodically gather discussion groups for the purpose of exchanging ideas.

LOCAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP CHAIRMAN

Each Local Rose Society appoints a Chairman of Membership. Ideally, the term is for three years, but can be any length of time subject to the society's bylaws or policies.

The Chairman of Membership for a local society is the contact for his/her society for the transmission of information and suggestions from the District Membership Representative and the ARS Marketing and Membership Committee.

The Local Society Membership Chairman seeks ways to increase membership in the local society, working within the bylaws of that society and at the wishes of its members. Duties might be to insure that membership information is available at all society functions; invite new members to join; remind members to renew; initiate contests to gain new members; write articles on the value of rose society membership; and other activities as the Chairman or the society may suggest.

III. MARKETING AND MEMBERSHIP PROMOTION

HOW TO CUSTOM FIT YOUR LOCAL SOCIETY!

By Pat Shanley

Chairman of the ARS Marketing & Membership Committee
under the administration of President Steve Jones, 2006-2009
Founding President of Manhattan Rose Society

“Membership in our local societies is down nationwide because people no longer care to belong to a group of any kind – including rose societies.” “People are too busy with the demands of everyday living to belong to a rose society.” Sound familiar? Here is the counter argument:

People make time for what gives them enjoyment. If it is an activity that restores the spirit, brings peace of mind and a sense of fulfillment, we will always find time for it. Growing roses is such a pastime and a most rewarding hobby. Membership in a local rose society is an extension of that interest and membership in the ARS is the thread that binds it all together.

So why is membership in the Local Societies trending down? Well, it isn't for every society. Some societies are experiencing growth. If your society is not one of them perhaps you should take a look at the structure of your organization. There are several things you can try that have worked for other societies. These suggestions are not magic pills to halt the decline, but rather a format for turning your group into a member friendly society that tries to address the needs of the majority of its members. We call this format “Custom Fitting Your Local Rose Society”. It is based on:

- Molding the society's schedule of activities to the time constraints of your members
- Not asking more of your members than they can give
- Giving your members what they want.

Changing the Format of Your Society:

We all know that change can be a good thing, but change is sometimes hard to accept, especially for those members who have been in charge of running the society for many years. Change can be difficult and sometimes scary. And sometimes the proposed change is not for the good of the society, **but if you are looking for new members – be prepared for new ideas.** Be open-minded and receptive. New members must be encouraged to offer suggestions and become part of the society and know that they are valued. Their new ideas must be heard and given serious consideration. Welcome this new blood into your society. It is not a threat. It is your future. Remember that if your society doesn't grow – it will surely fade away. It may not be the way you've always done things, but it may still be a good way to go forward.

It is also important to realize that every member will not be able to help you in every task that needs to be done, such as setting up or breaking down the show. However, they may be able to contribute in other ways – perhaps as a patron, or a host to a guest speaker or by opening their garden to the members. Every member has something to bring to the well being of the society.

It becomes a matter of finding what that contribution might be and remembering that **if you ask more than they are able to give, they will surely not remain a member.**

That being said here are some suggestions on how to **Custom Fit Your Society** and grow your membership:

SOCIETY GROWTH – A PRODUCT OF RECRUITING NEW MEMBERS AND RETAINING THE EXISTING MEMBERS –

Where to find new members:

New and existing ARS members that live in your area are excellent candidates for membership in your local society. By using the ARS Zip Code List for your area you can contact those members, by snail mail or e-mail, and invite them to attend a meeting and hopefully join your society. If you haven't requested a list from ARS Headquarters in a year or so – ask for it now. These people already have an interest. You don't have to sell them on growing roses. It's a natural fit.

Other helpful suggestions can be found in “Back to Basics” on page 25 of this Section.

MEETING SCHEDULES – DOES YOURS WORK?

Do you meet monthly – 12 meetings a year? Are your meetings well attended? Which months are sparsely attended? The answer to low meeting attendance is **custom fitting your meeting schedule** to the needs and time constraints of your members. Having meetings that are convenient to attend is the easiest way to ensure a good turnout. Try to schedule meetings for the times when members are most interested in roses and gardening. Historically this should be when spring arrives and through the summer, but that may not be the case for your society. Ask your members when they would like to meet. If your society winds up meeting once a quarter, it is better than disbanding for lack of attendance and who knows, maybe through adopting some of the suggestions discussed here, your society will grow, return to more prosperous times and a greater number of meetings. The bottom line is to have meeting when members want to attend them.

One additional point – remember that the holiday season is a busy and stressful time for all. When scheduling meetings and events at this time, try not to ask too much of your members. **The fastest way to lose members is to force a schedule or job on them that they do not have time to do. It will send them running for the hills.**

Protocol at Membership Meetings

At your membership meetings and events – every single member and guest that attends should be personally welcomed by the president. No one should be left out. People love that you know who they are. To be personally greeted is to make that person welcome and comfortable. It says that you care and makes them want to be there and to come back. They leave feeling that they are part of a group of friends. Friendship is the greatest gift we receive from belonging to our

rose society. The knowledge of growing roses is secondary. The personal relationships that are formed are what keep us coming back again and again – year after year.

If you are not good at remembering names – provide a name tag for every member. Stick on labels and a pen should be provided to every member and guest as they come in.

PROGRAMMING IS THE LIFE BLOOD OF YOUR SOCIETY:

- **Line up your programs and events well in advance.** When new members are considering whether or not to join and existing members are thinking about whether or not to renew – it is a great help to tell them **WHY** they should renew. People like to know what they will be getting for their money. Knowing what they will get for their dues, beforehand, is a good incentive.
- **Print your upcoming schedule of meetings and events for the coming year** in the last newsletter of the current year.
- **Continue to print the updated schedule of programs** in all of your newsletters. If you don't know the exact date, time and location – print the month with time and location TBA
- **Post your schedule** at local garden supply centers, nurseries, hardware stores – even grocery stores or the local coffee shop. Many businesses have bulletin boards where they would be happy to display your schedule. Be sure to include contact information.
- **Send press releases** of your events to your local newspapers, TV and Radio stations.
- **Present programs that satisfy your members' interests.** Programming is a vital part of the society. It is a major factor in keeping existing members and attracting new members. You might consider doing an annual survey to ask the members what they would like to hear about and what sort of extra events they would like to have – for instance a bus trip to botanical gardens featuring a rose garden in full bloom.
- **Look for speakers from outside of your society.** It's true that we all have a wealth of talent within our own society, but something different and new will hold the members' interest.
- **Develop an event that is unique to your society.** Give the members something that you can provide to them – that they **CANNOT** get on their own. It could be your rose show, a rose exhibition or it could be an event in addition to your rose show/exhibition. You could choose to formally celebrate the birthday of your society as an annual event - a combination Birthday Celebration and Private Garden Tour. Be sure to pick a day that most members can attend – usually a Saturday or a Sunday works well – at the height of Rose Season. It could be as elaborate as your members want. A luncheon complete with a birthday cake for your society, in a rose garden in full bloom, is a beautiful thing!

SUGGESTIONS FOR EVENTS:

- **Private Garden Tours** are a huge draw. It is considered a privilege to be invited to see a private garden.

- **A guided tour of a public garden** is also considered to be more special than just wandering around on your own.
- **Annual Garden Party.** Have one of your members open their garden to the membership. Set a date and time that would be convenient to the majority of the members. This is purely a social event – a time to come together to socialize and enjoy the beauty of the rose in a private setting. You can also use this event as a fund raiser by setting the ticket price so that the society will make a profit.
- **Annual Dinner Meeting** - A meeting where dinner is served and the members come together to enjoy each others company and to share rose information can be a unifying experience. It could be held in a restaurant, at the end of the growing season with a round table discussion of “What worked and What didn’t” in their gardens this season. This format works well with no business meeting – just rose friends coming together for an evening of camaraderie and good food. Once again this could be done as a fund raiser by setting the ticket price so that the society makes a profit. It could also be done as a benefit of membership, where the member pays for the dinner and the society pays the gratuity. It would be important for you to inform the members of this cost structure so that they would appreciate the benefit.

Additional information and suggestions on Programming can be found in Section IV – Society Programming & Activities (http://www.ars.org/Members_Only/wb-SectionIV.pdf)

PUBLISH AN INFORMATIVE NEWSLETTER:

Publish a newsletter that’s worth the price of your membership. A one page bulletin listing what’s going on in your society is not going to do it. A good percentage of members who join your society will not come to your membership meetings. They are the ones you need to reach out to with your newsletter. Publish a newsletter that is worth the price of your dues whether or not they choose to come to meetings. An informative and enjoyable newsletter will be a reason for the member who can’t make the meetings to continue renewing their membership.

Publish informative articles on seasonal tasks for the rose gardener, the exhibitor and the casual interest members, members who might enjoy history about the rose, an article on a public rose garden, disease resistant roses or how to purchase roses that will grow well in your area. If you are the editor and don’t like to write yourself, consider appointing a committee to help you. You could have each member of the committee write one article a month. You can solicit articles from members of other rose societies. It is a good idea to solicit articles from your membership and from outside society. Try to have the articles lined up and committed to the year before they will be published.

Another good source for articles is the ARS website. There are many articles available to you from the site that can be used in your newsletter.

MONEY!!! HOW TO FINANCE ALL OF THESE IDEAS:

Your treasury will grow from a number of sources:

- Membership dues
- Fund Raising Events - such as the Annual Garden Party
- Dinner Meeting
- Corporate Sponsors
- Annual Raffle / Raffles held at meetings
- Patron Program

Membership dues are, of course, your first source of revenue. But dues alone are not going to finance these events, provide the speakers for your programs and publish your newsletter. In effect your society is a small business – a not for profit – small business. You don't need \$10,000 in your treasury to be successful. You only need what it will take to finance what you have planned – plus enough to get started the next year.

While it is important to raise money you should not make every event a fundraiser. This gets old very quickly. People are willing to pay to come to special events and support the society, but not to contribute every single time.

What can you charge the members for that will be accepted by them? Legitimate costs to the membership are – costs for transportation – such as a bus, entrance fees to public gardens or a special event at a public garden, the cost of a dinner in a restaurant.

A little something for the members that is extra and not being charged for is a very nice touch at a fund raising event. If you are taking a bus trip, you can tell the members to “brown bag” it and bring their own lunch. However, providing them with a beverage and a snack for the return trip home is always appreciated. If you have Sam's or a Costco nearby – these items can be purchased very reasonably.

Annual Garden Party – This is a great fundraiser. Basically a member agrees to host the party and provide the refreshments and is reimbursed by the society. Key Point! – set a budget for this event so that the member knows how much to spend and there are no surprises on either side. Then set an admission price that would allow you to make a profit for the society.

Dinner Meeting – **You can also raise money by charging more for the dinner than the restaurant is asking.** Or you can use the dinner meeting as a benefit of membership asking only the restaurant charge from the members, having the gratuity come out of your treasury and having a cash bar for those who would like to have a glass of wine or a cocktail with their meal.

Corporate Sponsors – You can canvas local businesses for donations to your society and list the sponsors in your newsletter and at your events in return for their support.

Annual Raffle – Ask members to donate prizes for the raffle. You can also canvas local vendors – restaurants, nurseries, etc. Print raffle tickets in books of a set amount. Have each member

receive two books that can either be mailed or handed out at a meeting. Ask each member to purchase or sell at least the 2 books. Have the drawing take place at one of your special events or meetings. Raffle prizes can include gift certificates to local nurseries or mail order nurseries, Gardening books, Dinner for 2 at a local restaurant, a gift membership to your local society and/or the ARS. Perhaps your members might have access to goods or services that could be donated by their employer. In return for the donation you could list the donor as contributor/sponsor in your newsletter.

Raffles at Meetings – You can also hold raffles at your meetings. Ask your members to contribute raffle baskets. This could be done with a sign up sheet, allowing the member to choose which event he/ would like to contribute to, having 2-3 baskets at each meeting or event. If your society is in agreement you can also have a 50-50 raffle where each member contributes \$1.00. The member writes their name on the dollar bill and the bills are place in a container. At the end of the meeting one dollar bill is drawn and the person whose name is on the bill wins 50% of the pot. The other 50% goes into the treasury.

Patron Program – A Patron Program for your society can help raise much needing funding for your programs, events, newsletter, etc. When asking members to contribute to your Patron Program, remember to say that all contributions to your society are tax deductible. It is a great incentive. Your affiliation with the ARS has provided you with an exemption from federal income taxation under Section 501©3 of the Internal Revenue Code, therefore all contributions to the society are tax deductible by the donor as provided by law.

Remember to acknowledge all contributions in your newsletter and with a thank you letter. At the end of the year – thank all patrons and remind them that all contributions expire on Dec. 31st. This can be done through your President’s message in your newsletter and/or with a personal letter to each Patron. Tell them you hope that they will continue to support the society so that you can continue to bring them the events you have planned. They will already know what these events are because you will have already compiled the schedule and will have printed it in the newsletter as well as having announced the schedule at the previous event. This also emphasizes that you are not trying to build a huge treasury for an unspecified purpose.

Patron Program – donations can be listed in your newsletter under the following categories:

American Beauty Rose –	\$500.00+
Platinum Rose –	\$100.00+
Gold Rose –	\$50.00+
Silver Rose –	\$25.00+
Red Rose –	up to \$25.00

Patron in Kind – There is also value to non monetary contributions made by your members. For instance – has a member opened their home to overnight a speaker? Opened their home for an event? Donated the cost of printing for one of your newsletters, donated a prize to your annual raffle? These types of donations are very valuable and deserve recognition. You can

acknowledge them under the heading of “Patron in Kind” which can be listed along with your monetary Patrons in your newsletter. People like to be recognized, appreciated and thanked for their contributions and this is a great way to say “Thank you”.

Patron in Kind categories:

American Beauty Rose –	\$500.00+
Platinum Rose –	\$100.00+
Gold Rose –	\$50.00+
Silver Rose –	\$25.00+
Red Rose –	up to \$25.00

MEMBER BENEFITS PROGRAM

Giving the Members More “Bang for Their Buck” –

Everyone likes to feel that they are getting their money’s worth and maybe even a little extra. Having a local society Members Benefits Program is a way to give your members more “bang for their buck”. Ask local vendors to give a discount to your members. The vendor can be rose related or not. Perhaps there is a local nursery or garden supply center that would offer a discount to you members. You can also approach local restaurants, beauty salons or dry cleaners, etc.

In return for the discount to your members you can list the participating vendors in your newsletter, at your Rose Show/exhibition and other events. It is a good deal for them and for your members. This is the kind of benefit that will encourage new members to join and existing members to renew.

*Additional Fund Raising ideas can be found in Section IV,
http://www.ars.org/Members_Only/wb-SectionIV.pdf*

BE REALISTIC IN YOUR EXPECTATIONS

Don’t expect more than the members are able to give. If you have 50 members in your society and you are expecting all 50 to attend every meeting and event and participate and work at every function – you are being unrealistic. The average percentage you can expect to attend your meetings and events is 30%. The working group – those who make things happen – is much smaller. Remember that if every member volunteered for every job, you would have mass chaos.

Try to recruit your newer members into the workings of the society – but when asked what the job entails – try to explain the task so that you don’t frighten off the member you are asking. Try to present the job in a positive light. **It’s just like answering the question from a novice, “Aren’t roses really difficult to grow?” Your answer to that question will either encourage them to grow roses or send them running for the hills. Once you have convinced the new member to take the job – REMEMBER – be receptive to their ideas.**

Summary

- It is extremely important for the members to believe that this is their society and they have a say.
- If your meeting attendance is down – consider keeping the meetings that are historically well attended and eliminating the ones that are poorly attended. Fewer membership meetings are better than no membership meetings at all. Keep this in mind for your Board meetings as well. Only have as many Board meetings as you really need. People have enough to do in their private lives and will resent having to come to board meetings that are not necessary.
- Set up your programs, speakers and events well in advance and let the members know what they can expect from the society in the coming year. This lets them know exactly what they are getting for their dues – whether they are just joining or up for renewal.
- Publish the schedule of meetings and events regularly. Post it in the local shops. Send press releases to your local newspapers, TV & Radio Stations. Get the word out.
- Publish an informative newsletter. Remember that some of your members will not attend your meetings and events. A great newsletter is reason enough to pay the dues and become or stay a member
- Develop an event that is unique to your society. It can be a Birthday Celebration and private garden tour, an annual garden party, annual picnic, annual dinner meeting or a rose show/exhibition. Create an event that is special and only available by belonging to your society.
- Give the members “More Bang for Their Buck”. Encourage your local vendors to give a discount to your members in return for publicizing their establishments in your newsletter and at your meetings and events. It’s a good deal for both of you.
- Be receptive to the new ideas that your new members will bring to the society. Change can be good and can breathe new life into your society.
- The best publicity that your society can get is from a happy member. Be sure that members leaving your meetings and events go away thinking that they have been welcomed and have made friends. This is what they will tell their family and other friends and will be a great source of referrals.
- Above All: Give the Members What They Want...Don’t ask them for more than they can give.

Below is a sample of a survey you might consider sending to your members. Asking members for their input is vital in communicating that your society is a “Member Friendly” society. Use our survey or create your own, but do consider this important step in letting your membership know that their opinion counts.

ROSE SOCIETY ANNUAL SURVEY

Dear Rose Society Member,

We would like our Society activities to be fun, educational, and helpful. You can help by telling us more about your rose interests. Please complete this survey (no name required) and return at our next society meeting or mail to the address shown below. Thank you for participating.

1. On a scale of 1-5 (5 being the highest), please circle the number corresponding with your overall satisfaction with the Society?

(Lowest) 1 2 3 4 5 (Highest)

2. The amount of communication and educational/informative materials received from the Society is:

_____ too much
_____ just right
_____ not enough

3. What was your primary reason for joining the Society? Please choose one response.

_____ learn how to grow roses
_____ learn how to grow roses better
_____ newsletter
_____ joined to compete in rose shows
_____ meet other people who grow roses
_____ social activities
_____ other educational programs
_____ I simply enjoy roses
_____ other (please explain)

4. How did you first learn about the Society?

_____ fellow member
_____ American Rose Society
_____ information from rose show
_____ recent publicity
_____ other _____

5. Do you find the newsletter informative?

_____ yes _____ no

6. I consider our society bulletin:

_____ very important
_____ somewhat important

_____ not important

7. Is there anything the Society can do to improve the newsletter that would make it more useful to you?

8. How long have you been a member? _____

9. Are you a member of the American Rose Society?

_____ yes _____ no

10. Would you like to join the American Rose Society?

_____ yes _____ no

11. My main rose interests are:

- _____ garden/rose bed
- _____ cutting for in house
- _____ exhibiting
- _____ arrangements
- _____ home landscape
- _____ helping my spouse
- _____ other _____

12. Rose types I grow or would like to know more about:

- _____ Hybrid Teas/Grandifloras
- _____ Floribundas
- _____ Miniatures
- _____ Old Garden Roses
- _____ Shrubs
- _____ Climbers
- _____ Other landscape types
- _____ Winter hardy/heat tolerant
- _____ Disease resistant roses

13. Currently I grow roses numbering approx:

- _____ 1 - 10
- _____ 11 - 20
- _____ 21 - 50
- _____ More than 50 (approx. _____)

14. Indicate monthly programs you would like for us to offer. Rate 1, 2, 3, etc., with 1 being the area of your strongest interest.

- _____ Disease resistant varieties of roses
- _____ Information on varieties, with photos.

- Pruning
- Fertilization
- Disease & Insect Control; Spraying
- Winter Protection
- Rose Show Exhibiting
- Rose Arrangements
- Roses for Home Landscape
- Rose Gardens in the U.S. and other countries; photos and commentary
- Soils and pH
- Rose Propagation
- Rose Photography
- Growing Roses in Containers
- Other Programs (list on reverse)

15. Rose Shows, local:

- I seldom attend
- I never attend
- I currently exhibit in rose shows
- I would like to exhibit someday
- I would like to learn more about it.
- I am not interested in exhibiting

16. Society activities I enjoy most include:

17. Activity changes or modifications I suggest:

18 .Are the society meetings at the best time for you?

- I like the meeting time.
- I prefer another time _____

19. To recruit new members, I suggest:

20. The Rose Society would like to encourage members to get more involved. Do you have an interest in serving on a committee or helping with a society activity?

Additional Comments welcome:

If mailing in this survey, please send to:



Suggested Letter

TO A PROSPECTIVE LOCAL

SOCIETY MEMBER WHO IS A NEW OR EXISTING MEMBER OF ARS

Date: _____

Dear _____,

I am the Membership Chairman of the _____ Rose Society, and I would like to invite you to be our guest at any of our monthly meetings. Our next meeting will be on _____ and will be held at _____. Our speaker for the evening will be _____ and he/she will present a program on _____.

Because you are a member of the American Rose Society, we know you are interested in roses, and would like to grow them to the best of your ability. Our meetings always include a program on rose care for the month, and a discussion of problems which we are experiencing in the garden. We also offer fine programs on horticulture topics of interest to Rosarians. These programs cover a wide variety of rose-related interests, and might include disease resistant roses, the newest varieties of hybrid tea and miniature roses, the best, easiest to grow Old Garden Roses and shrub roses, making bouquets-arrangements with roses, rose photography, building a new rose bed, the latest in disease and insect protection, effective watering systems, companion planting, landscaping and more. Many of our members are ARS-accredited Consulting Rosarians who are available to help you with your specific rose problems.

Our most popular events are our *(list activities which your society sponsors. For example: a tour of members' private gardens, an annual short course for growing roses. Here is the place you will tell about your best contribution to the community – the public garden which your society maintains, sponsors, assists with, or serves in an advisory capacity. Here you might also discuss your partnership with the local rose nursery where your members assist customers with rose selections and answer questions in early spring.)*

You are welcome as a guest at our next meeting or at any meeting, and, of course, we hope that you will join the _____ Rose Society as a member. If you have any questions, please call me at _____.

We hope to see you soon.

Best regards,

_____, Society Membership Chairman

Telephone # _____, e-mail _____

How to increase your renewal rate

A membership that has expired and gone unrenewed is not necessarily a lost cause and should be actively pursued. There is a process to use to get your members to renew their membership.

At the National level, Headquarters sends reminder letters to all ARS members whose membership is up for renewal on the following schedule: three months prior, two months prior, one month prior and “your membership has now expired”.

The District Membership Representatives receive a list of expired ARS members from Headquarters. They then send a letter inviting the expired member to renew, explaining the benefits of membership in the American Rose Society.

Your local society process can be any part of this procedure, but should DEFINITELY include at least one reminder notice and one follow up expired membership notice. In today’s busy world, membership renewals take a back seat to more pressing day to day matters and we don’t always remember when our memberships are due for renewal. A letter stating that a membership will expire next month that includes a **renewal application** is a welcome reminder. Be sure to include dues information as well as where to send the check. A self-addressed envelope to your society is also helpful and a timesaving measure for the member. Making contact is the best way to keep your members!

Suggested Letter TO NON-RENEWING LOCAL SOCIETY MEMBERS

Date _____

Jane or John Doe
Address
City and State/Zip

Expiration Date: Mar-08

Dear _____,

Your _____ Rose Society membership has expired. The expiration date is noted above. We value having you as a member and we are hoping that this is just an oversight. We have a great line up of programs and events planned for 2008 including such speakers as: *(give the names of your speakers and your programs here)*. We hope you will take a moment to renew your membership. You will also continue to receive the award winning, informative newsletter, *(name of your newsletter)*.

The cost of dues is \$___ for single membership. You can also add a family member for just \$___ more. We also have a two-year rate of \$___ for single membership and to add your family member would be just \$___ more.

Please make your check payable to _____ and mail to:
_____.

I look forward to seeing you soon and welcoming you back.

Best regards,

_____, _____ Rose Society Membership Chairperson

(This letter can also come from the President or both the President and the Membership Chair)

Suggested Letter TO NON-RENEWING ARS MEMBERS

Date: _____

Jane or John Doe
Address
City and State/Zip

Dear _____:

Just a note to let you know that we miss you and look forward to your renewal to the **American Rose Society**, and its members who care!

We do not want you to miss a single issue of *American Rose* magazine or all the upcoming events, rose shows, and speakers. We are here to assist you in every way possible to grow better roses, to join us in many social events, and to meet others who share your interest in roses. Membership renewal is only a call away. Laura Pfender, our Membership Director, can be reached at 318-938-5402, ext. 108, and you can use your credit card to pay. Or, drop your renewal in the mail to Laura at ... **American Rose Society, P. O. Box 30,000, Shreveport, LA 71130**... or you can easily renew online at www.ars.org.

American Rose magazine will be sent to you bimonthly, for a total of 5 issues, plus the *Annual*. With this schedule of printing you will be getting an 84 page issue every 2 months! The Editorial staff is working hard to be on a schedule whereby your magazine will arrive on time.

Membership rates are:

1-year Individual is \$49; Joint is \$62, 1-year Senior is \$46, and Sr. Joint is \$59.

2-year Individual is \$95; Joint is \$117; 2-year Senior \$89; Sr. Joint is \$114.

3-year Individual is \$140; Joint is \$170; 3-year Senior \$132; Sr. Joint is \$169.

Note – With 2- year membership receive the Ortho Book “All About Roses” and with 3-year membership receive the Ortho Book – “The Complete Guide to Roses”. See the ARS website for details www.ars.org and the complete fee schedule.

Please take advantage of the upcoming new and exciting issues of *American Rose* magazine and all the American Rose Society has to offer! More information on member benefits can be found on our website www.ars.org. If there are any questions about your rose garden that I may help you with, please take a few minutes to call or e-mail me. My contact information is listed below.

Sincerely,

_____ Membership Chairperson, _____ (Your Local Society’s name)
Telephone # and/or email

Contributed by Pat Hibbard, Member ARS Marketing & Membership Committee

To The Membership Chair: How To Sell Memberships

by Baxter Williams, Member, ARS Marketing & Membership Committee

STEP 1: BE COMMITTED TO GROWTH

As Chairperson of your local society Membership Committee, your primary job is to CAUSE MEMBERSHIP GROWTH. Your approach should be to use every avenue available to contact the public so they can learn of the advantages of society membership. This is just a basic sales approach: find the need, then show how your product meets that need. You, and your society officers, must wish the society to grow. Don't let any argument distract you from your mandate to MAKE THE MEMBERSHIP GROW IN NUMBERS.

Are there impediments to growth? – Lengthy business meetings conducted at membership meetings are a huge turnoff. Members attend your meetings to learn about the rose and to socialize with Rose Friends. Inadequate seating, meetings that don't start/end on time, newsletters that are late, no technical depth in presentations/articles – these are all impediments to growth. Eliminate them!! That is what society officers are supposed to do.

Make every facet of your society conducive to membership growth and stability. Pursue every approach to gaining public attention to the society and its benefits. Put meeting notices in the newspapers. Be a regular guest on local garden-oriented radio shows. Give your name and phone number to your local library. Leave membership application forms at all large nurseries, after you sign up the proprietors! Exchange your officer/CR list with other local flower clubs and societies. Make "(name) Rose Society Member" yard signs for your members to install in their front yards. Make sure the superintendent of the city park knows how to put people in touch with your society. The biggest barrier to outsiders is not knowing how to find you.

STEP 2: KNOW YOUR MARKET

Who are the likeliest to become members? Table A compares characteristics of those who might be approached. Some will find you, if you've left adequate "trails" to your doorstep; but the society will experience its most profound growth when you actively pursue the un-enrolled.

Table A. The Market

*** Local Rose Society**

- Beginners/Experienced
- Individuals/Couples/Families
- Non-member/Renewal
- ARS Member-only
- Newly-married; New House
- Just Arrived from Out-of-Town/Out-of-State

*** American Rose Society**

- Beginners/Experienced
- Individuals/Couples/Families
- Non-member/Renewal
- No Nearby Rose Society

STEP 3: KNOW THE NEEDS

The NEEDS of prospective members (and current members, too) are basically:

- Problem Solving
- Horticulture Knowledge
- Variety Source Location
- Rose Care Products Source Location
- Society Needs

Your job: show how your society can fill those needs.

STEP 4: KNOW YOUR PRODUCT

Your PRODUCT is your SOCIETY. It is made up of many features that will benefit the members, some of which are shown in Table B. Notice that, on district and national levels, the American Rose Society offers the same type of product features to its members, but not identical in content to local products.

Table B. Product & Product Features

*** Local Rose Society**

- Newsletter
- Brochures
- Consulting Rosarians
- Local Lending Library
- Gift Memberships
- Garden Tours and Demonstrations
- Monthly Programs
- Annual/Monthly Shows/Exhibitions
- Local Horticultural Practices
- Connections to Local Nurseries

*** American Rose Society**

- *American Rose magazine & the American Rose Annual*
- *The Handbook for Selecting Roses*
- Reciprocal Garden Program – ARS membership includes FREE or reduced admission to over 200 botanical gardens nationwide.
- FREE e-access to ARS specialty bulletins
- Member Benefits Program – offering discounts to ARS members from participating Nurseries and companies
- Outstanding website with **Members Only** section www.ars.org
- Consulting Rosarians, Rose Show Judges
- Gift Membership rates
- American Rose Center (ARC) in Shreveport, LA
- National/District Conventions/Conferences
- Nationwide Practices/ARC Trials and Research
- New Product Evaluation Committee
- Educational Literature/Bookstore

STEP 5: TOOLS

Since most society memberships are the result of one-on-one encounters, it makes a lot of sense to equip yourself with in-hand TOOLS that will enhance success. Table C lists several items that can be used to advantage. In each encounter, your chance of gaining a member will be more likely if you have something to give or at least show to the prospective member. Brochures and application forms should **always** include an address and phone number for future contact.

Table C. Tools

*** Local Rose Society**

- | | |
|-------------------|----------------------|
| --- Brochure(s) | --- Application Form |
| --- Pen or Pencil | --- Local Newsletter |

*** American Rose Society**

- | | |
|-------------------|----------------------|
| --- Brochure(s) | --- Application Form |
| --- Pen or Pencil | |
- *American Rose/Handbook for Selecting Roses*

Back issues of American Rose, the Annual and the Handbook are available for your membership promotions from ARS Headquarters at no charge.

STEP 6: DEVELOP THE TECHNIQUE

Good salespersons always have an idea of how their “sales pitch” will be delivered before it happens – they then guide the conversation so that it often results in a sale. They will, at first, write down the basic points they feel will lead to a sale, then commit them to memory. They practice their pitch, maybe try it out on a friend, and have in mind ways to bring a conversation back to the subject, if it strays.

Sound complicated? It’s not. Here’s a typical approach to a casual visitor to your rose show/exhibition or to your booth at the annual lawn and garden show:

You: *Hi there! Do you have some roses in your yard?*

Visitor: *I have a few.*

You: *Me, too. Do you have, say, a hundred?*

Visitor: *Oh, no! Only six!*

You: *Here’s a brochure that might be of help. It gives the basics of good rose care, a list of some varieties that grow well here, and a list of consultants that you can call for free advice.*

Visitor: *Thank you.*

You: *Our club, The (name) Rose Society, has (number) families scattered all over town. We teach people how to grow good roses. We meet on the (2nd Thursday) at (time) in the evening so that working people can attend. We have good attendance because we don’t conduct business when we meet!*

Visitor: *I like that!*

You: *There’s a monthly newsletter included in the membership fee that tells what to do now so that, a month from now, you’ll have good roses. (Show a copy of the newsletter, but DON’T give it away. It is a “product feature”; they can have one when they pay to join.) There is a (number) – yard garden tour in (month) **FOR ROSE SOCIETY MEMBERS ONLY** which is worth more than the (\$) dollar membership fee; it allows you to see what grows well locally, in case you’d like to try some of them in your own yard. And there are discounts in some local nurseries, so you can actually get your (\$) dollars back. It “pays” you to join our club. If you’ll join today, we’ll give you back issues of the newsletter, a membership card, and you’ll get the*

(next month) issue which goes into the Post Office on Monday. (At this point, they'll either join, or thank you and walk away. You have given them a 1-minute presentation of the essentials of the society.)

Visitor: *Is it (\$) dollars for each of us?*

You: *No, it's for the entire family through December 31st. But let me suggest, also, that this is a very nice, yet inexpensive, gift for Mom or for a friend; and we send a Gift Notice to say that you are the donor. Step over here to my "office" (any flat spot)!*

STEP 7: PRACTICE THE TECHNIQUE

Go over the "pitch" until you don't have to use notes. Preparation makes a big difference in how you are perceived by the listener. If you hesitate, a visitor might think that you don't know much about roses, either. Practice! Practice! Practice.

STEP 8: DON'T STOP

Be ready to "sell" a membership anywhere you go, whether in the mall, at the show, at the office, in the checkout line at the supermarket, etc., etc. The "needy" (for rose info) are all around us. As a matter of fact, while one new member is filling out a membership form, turn around and start talking to someone else! When you stop, or sit down, or, as my father use to say, "put you hands in your pockets," the process is curtailed. Don't stop. Keep on signing 'em up until the newsletter editor is forced to increase the newsletter paper supplies!

Back to basics ATTRACTING AND KEEPING NEW MEMBERS

- Appoint an enthusiastic and active member to be your Membership Chairperson.
- Ask your local newspaper to run a feature story on roses, local rose gardens or an interesting rose society member. Contribute articles on roses.
- Contribute to your local educational channel when it has a fund drive. Donate rosebushes and offer free planting by members of the society.
- Encourage Consulting Rosarians to give talks and programs to garden clubs, civic clubs or on local radio talk shows. Invite those attending to visit the rose society and mail them a complimentary copy of your bulletin.
- Publicize availability of Consulting Rosarian service to help non-member rose growers.
- Have an information table at your events, show/exhibition staffed by Consulting Rosarians who will answer questions about rose care and problems.
- Have rose care question-and-answer booths in various locations, such as nurseries and at local garden events.
- Set up a colorful, attractive display booth at the county fair or home and garden exposition. Man the booth with friendly, helpful people from your society who will give educational advice on roses.
- Have a rose show or display (exhibition), and hold it in a mall, public garden or garden center where large numbers of people will attend. http://www.ars.org/Members_Only/wb-SectionVI.pdf
- Make your rose show an open show with classes and awards for the general public. Have a novice section.
- At the rose show, put up a sign “Free Drawing for Rose Bush”. Contact everyone who enters his or her name and send literature and an invitation to a meeting.
- Take roses to work. Talk to co-workers and others to interest them in rose growing. Invite them to your meetings.
- Take roses to banks or stores. Include a card with your society’s name, along with when and where you meet on the card.
- Publish a list of rose varieties that will grow well in your area and include disease resistant varieties in the listing. Distribute the listing at society events and at local nurseries together with information on how to join your society & ARS.
- Prepare an informational brochure about your society and include information on rose selection and rose culture tips. Distribute at all events.
- Buy rose books for donation to the library. Inscribe the books to show they are donated by your society and include the telephone numbers of your Consulting Rosarians, and when and where your society meets.
- Donate an ARS Library Subscription to your local library. The subscription will provide American Rose magazine to the library. Contact ARS headquarters for details.
- Raise money and attract new members by selling chances on “Win a Rose Garden” with material and labor to be supplied by society members.
- Create and maintain a public garden in your community. You’ll receive great publicity and new members, especially if the gardens are well maintained.

- Sponsor an Open Garden Tour of several members' gardens. The public enjoys seeing homes with roses in a garden setting. Make sure your local newspaper and other media carry the story.
- Organize a field trip and invite the public. Make a profit, have fun and attract new members.
- Have society members take turns going to local nurseries to help give rose information and literature to customers. Nurseries may want to advertise.
- Make the names and phone numbers of your Consulting Rosarians available to your local nurseries, so they can give them to anyone who has a problem with roses.
- Hold an annual pruning demonstration at local nurseries and/or the public rose garden. Advertise. Use hands-on approach if possible. Provide free coffee. Have society literature and membership applications available for your society and the ARS.
- Send a complimentary bulletin or notice of your monthly meetings to all known rose growers in the area.
- Print the names of guests in your newsletter and send them a complimentary copy.
- Consider a special introductory rate for first year's dues.
- Keep any business discussed at membership meetings to a minimum of no more than 10 minutes. Make announcements of plans and events. Society business should be conducted at Board meetings only to avoid losing the interest of those attending.
- Volunteer at your local botanical garden. Have your members wear name tags indicating the Society name. The members should be available to answer the public's rose questions. Have printed information available on joining the society and the ARS.
- Provide an information table on advantages of ARS membership at your meetings.
- Maintain a list of local suppliers, and where to obtain needed supplies.
- Provide transportation for members who can't drive to meetings.
- Give door prizes at meetings. Offer plant exchanges, including rosebushes.
- Reward members who go above and beyond by offering the ARS Bronze Medal, which is the highest ARS honor that can be given for outstanding Local Society contributions. Create additional ways of recognizing special service such as "Member of the Month."
- Growing roses and all the activities that accompany your involvement with the hobby should be enjoyable. Make it fun to be a member of your local rose society.
- Share your best ideas with us. We'll pass them along to the other local societies across the country.

by the ARS Local Society Relations Committee