



San Jose Municipal Rose Garden

ROSE GARDEN CASE STUDY

Synopsis

The All America Rose Selections (AARS) placed the San Jose Municipal Rose Garden on probation due to severe garden decline. Budget cutbacks combined with poor horticultural practices resulted in neglect: diseased and dying roses, suckers and rampant weeds. The Friends of the San Jose Rose Garden (FSJRG) a volunteer organization was formed to rescue the garden. They did this by establishing a public private partnership with the City of San Jose and developing innovative techniques. A dramatic turnaround was achieved and the garden was restored to its former glory.

Background and Overview

In 2005 the San Jose Municipal Rose Garden was placed on probation by the AARS due to insufficient pruning, deadheading, weeding, prevalent blackspot, rust and mildew throughout the garden. A reliance on a non-selective herbicide, RoundUp, to combat weeds in the rose beds led to the weakening and death of many roses. Also, serious budget cutbacks and reduced staffing levels within the parks department were to blame for the gardens poor condition. The probation however was not made public and the garden continued to decline. In January 2007 due to limited staffing only 20% of the rose garden was even pruned. Weeds were growing higher than roses, and in the middle of some beds wayward trees had even sprouted several feet tall. Something had to be done to save this local treasure.

In early 2007, residents approached a new councilmember, Pierluigi Oliverio, who agreed action was required. With the resistance to change the task was not going to be easy. Local residents and rosarians, Terry Reilly and Beverly Rose Hopper, knew they needed to act fast if they were going to save the garden, but they had several challenges ahead of them. First and foremost, a municipal mindset presented many roadblocks to allow for the garden to enlist community volunteers. Terry and

Beverly knew that without changing this mindset and without changing detrimental horticultural practices, the gardens had no chance of surviving. Terry contacted the AARS to find out the status of the recent judging and found out the garden had been on probation since 2005 which had never been made public to the citizens of San Jose. This was the Smoking Gun.



Terry and Beverly increased public awareness of the gardens plight by presenting the AARS probation letter to the city council and by reaching out to local media on the garden's behalf. With the resulting attention brought on this Rose Garden, a San Jose Historic Landmark, and with the idea to use volunteers to help city park maintenance, the city council directed the park staff to proceed with implementing a proposed framework for advancing public/private partnerships in the city parks. The Rose Garden became one of eleven case studies in San Jose's City Parks with Recreation and Neighborhood Service. Six months later, a new policy was developed allowing the council to permit corporate sponsorship of all San Jose parks, and approve the institution of a new volunteer program.

In September 2007, Beverly and Terry created Friends of the San Jose Rose Garden (FSJRG), which officially “adopted” the garden under the Adopt-A-Park and the City of San Jose's Public/Private Partnership Program.

Their goal: To build a returning volunteer base and remove the garden's AARS probation status while also introducing the San Jose community to the beauty of roses and the rewards of maintaining and preserving a historic local landmark.

Municipal Challenges

- Due to budget cutbacks and reduced staffing the San Jose Municipal Rose Garden was unable to adequately maintain itself; there were only two full-time staff to care for 5.5 acre park which houses a 2.5 acre formal garden with more than 3,500 roses. Besides the thousands of roses, staff was also responsible for the expansive lawns, turf between the rose beds, and the maintenance of restrooms.
- Because the gardens are located within a city park, barriers were present to enlist the local community and volunteers to help balance staffing/budget issues.
- Union issues tangled efforts to put maintenance of the park up for city bid.

Horticultural Challenges

- RoundUp was used in rose beds to combat weeds even though roses are very sensitive to spray drift from this nonselective herbicide. This resulted in visible damage with stunted growth, sickly and dying plants.
- Roses were pruned too harshly each winter for local climatic conditions.
- Roses were not regularly deadheaded throughout the blooming season.
- The soil appeared dry, cracked, hard and lacking organics.
- Mulch was not used in the rose beds.

Program

Beginning in September 2007, Friends of the San Jose Rose Garden developed and implemented an inventive grassroots-marketing program. This would increase awareness of the gardens predicament, while also utilizing the support of the local community and media. Using the AARS “probation” status as the center of their new “Free the Roses” campaign, FSJRG’s awareness program included the following elements:

- **Tiered volunteer programs**

Massive Volunteer Days - Individual Volunteer Program

FSJRG enlists individuals to volunteer in the garden by promoting the special connection people can experience by working in the gardens while also regularly maintaining and restoring a historic San Jose landmark. No rose or garden experience required.

Master Volunteer Program

Master Volunteers go through a special training program, demonstrating their skills to city staff. Once certified, they

are identified with a special vest signifying their commitment and the hours they have put into the garden. Master Volunteer’s (MV’s) can come and go and they like, working in the garden, provided they wear their vest. They log their hours and beds they worked on so city staff can occasionally check their work. Master Volunteers assist in teaching other volunteers on the Massive Volunteer Days. They are often approached by visitors in the garden telling them how wonderful the garden is looking.



Corporate volunteer program:

FSJRG helps local businesses organize “team building days,” which encourage businesses and their employees to “stop and smell the roses.” Working together in the garden, colleagues foster a spirit of community, and provide a level playing field where everyone contributes equally. Corporate volunteers will see immediate results from their work, and can regularly return with friends and family to see how their “adopted” area is doing. Garden staff and volunteers supply tools and assist each group to make sure their day is memorable. Due to union issues, City policy had to be changed to allow companies to “pay” their employees to work in the garden.



Friends of the San Jose Rose Garden website:

The website serves as a tool to communicate with local rosarians/volunteers and to promote the various garden programs. The website includes the following information:

- Individual and master program volunteer sign up page and tools for tracking volunteer hours
- Details on the Corporate Volunteer program
- Recent news, calendar and newsletter registration
- Training videos that guide visitors through deadheading/pruning techniques
- The ability to “Donate” online
- Photos/videos of past volunteer events
- In depth history of The San Jose Municipal Rose Gardens
- Garden staff photos/bios
- Garden map

The screenshot shows the website's header with the title "FRIENDS OF THE SAN JOSE ROSE GARDEN" and the tagline "A Historic Landmark". A navigation menu includes links for Home, Volunteers, Master Vol, News, Calendar, Photos, History, Videos, Donate, RG Staff, and Contact. The main content area features a prominent announcement: "Please see our **RENOVATION PROJECT PAGE!**". Below this, there are several sections with green headers: "Upcoming Events", "Recent News and Newsletters", "Master Volunteer", "MAPS & Adopt-A-Bed", "Training Videos", "Volunteer Sign-up", "Donate", and "Photo / Videos of Past Events". Each section contains a brief description of the service or information provided. On the right side of the page, there is a logo for "Friends of the San Jose Rose Garden" featuring a hand holding a pair of pruning shears. At the bottom right, there is a photograph of volunteers working in a rose garden.

- **Donations program:** The FSJRG relies on volunteer efforts and donations. They use the donations to cover expenses including web hosting, supplies, filing fees (IRS, City, County), food/drink for the volunteer days, and printing and mailing costs. The website has a donate button that allows visitors to easily click and donate using a credit card or the PayPal system online.

- **Adopt-A-Bed program:** Certified Master Volunteers can choose the rose bed they wish to adopt and they maintain it on their own time.
- **Newsletter:** More than 600 homes subscribe to the newsletter, now sent by PDF e-mail to reduce costs, which announces upcoming volunteer deadheading/pruning days, and rose educational/gardening tips. It also increases communications/awareness in the community. The newsletter usually comes out prior to a Massive Volunteer Event.

- FSJRG used the AARS poor rating and “probation” status as the center of their new and creative “Save the Garden” communication initiative. FSJRG kicked off the newsletter with a “Free the Roses” from probation volunteer day. After the rose garden was “adopted” the next catchy newsletter was entitled “Going into Rehab” and during “deadheading and weeding” season, the newsletter took on a hippie theme.
- These creative ideas were also used as the theme for press releases and a successful local media outreach program

- **Public relations/local media outreach:** Using the local media as a tool to raise awareness about the gardens needs, FSJRG sent a series of letters to the editor, and distributed press releases regarding their efforts.

Horticultural

- **Prune High for Maximum Display:** In January 2008, FSJRG implemented prune high methods rather than the hard pruning that the garden typically received. They produced a short training video, posted it on YouTube and sent e-mail with the link to the volunteers. Prior to pruning, each rose bed had stakes placed approximately every 5 - 10 feet that were marked with florescent paint indicating the height to which the roses should be pruned. This served as a quick reference guide to volunteers who were instructed not to prune below the level marked. Using this method, the entire 3,500 bush rose garden was pruned by volunteers in only two hours. This rapid pruning method led to additional publicity after the event as “pruning at 33 rpm (roses per minute.)”



- **Moratorium on RoundUp:** The city agreed to stop using RoundUp on the roses to control weeds. Instead, the use of pre-emergent and Fusilade is being used, along with old-fashioned but effective hand pulling of weeds, weed-cloth and mulch. The City was reluctant at first to try weed cloth and mulch for weed control, so the FSJRG convinced them to “test” 20% of the beds. The results were dramatic and city staff has now been convinced to use weed cloth and mulch in the entire garden.
- **Regular Deadheading:** Between massive volunteer days and individual programs, the rose garden is being deadheading on a regular if not daily basis by Master Volunteers. This consistent removal of spent blooms has encouraged rapid repeat bloom, and has reduced the spread of fungal disease.

Results:

- Five successful volunteer days with more than 500 individual volunteers participating to-date.
- The Master Volunteer Program is a tremendous success with 90+ volunteers logging more than 300 hours in the first 6 weeks of the program. They average 55 hours a week.
- The volunteer programs reached people beyond the local community. In fact, only 20 were members of the local neighborhood association, and some drove as far as 30 miles to participate.
- 20 rose beds have been adopted via the FSJRG “Adopt a Bed” program.
- The local San Jose media has covered the gardens several times, including feature stories in *San Jose Mercury News* and a broadcast segment on the local ABC affiliate KGO-TV.

- The Public/Private Partnership Program was completed in January 2008 where it was recommended that the city create a framework for advancing future public-private partnerships, develop a proposed structure and work plan to establish Parks Foundation and develop a community volunteer program. In July '08, the City hired a Community Coordinator for Volunteer Management.
- The 2008 Plan for the Friends of the San Jose Rose Garden ensures the group stays on track and outlines responsibilities, including:
 - For the first time in a decade, the city’s commitment to mulch the beds and to put down weed cloth.



- The city has also agreed to use environmentally safe Neem Oil to control black spot and mildew on the roses.
- The installation of new signs highlighting AARS winning roses and other varieties as part of an Eagle Scout project in the fall of 2008.
- FSJRG received a City Grant to cover the bulk of their expenses including sending 500 newsletters to local residents/volunteers to keep them informed of upcoming events in the Rose Garden.
- The local Councilmember recently sponsored an outdoor Movie Night at the garden to celebrate the volunteer’s efforts and awarded a City Commendation to Beverly and Terry for their efforts and initiative in founding the FSJRG.
- AARS has already noticed the renewed efforts of FSJRG and is extremely pleased to see the garden moving in the right direction.



- New horticultural practices implemented such as pruning high and stopping the use of RoundUp has produced plants that are less stressed, larger, more prolific, and better able to ward off disease.
- The turnaround in the garden is visibly dramatic; the roses are much healthier and producing spectacular bloom.

Tips:

- Techniques used by rosarians may be different than those used by city workers over the years. You must get the city to try new techniques for better rose care. Trying out new techniques on sample test beds is a good non-threatening method and results can be compared and re-evaluated.
- Forge relationships with the City’s Park Director, the Garden Staff, and any active garden community or neighborhood association – there’s power in numbers.
- Keep positive attitude when working with City employees.
- If available, have the City use the Court’s Weekend Work Program to use low risk offenders to work in the garden to supplement city staff. Example: <http://tinyurl.com/weekendwork>
- Feature garden staff in the newsletter or web site; make them feel connected to the group. It is a partnership.
- Leverage the probation status with the media to get attention to the garden, and help recruit volunteers
- Use local radio and television stations PSA’s to announce volunteer days.
- Press releases need to have a hook, “Probation” “Rehab” (with reference to a celebrity) examples can be provided.
- Have nametags for all volunteers at events. Helps people get to know each other.

- Have the Master Volunteers log their hours online and post them on the web site. It becomes a bit competitive. Google Docs works well for this. Reward Master Volunteers with service stars for their vests, after 10 hours of work.
- Volunteers who surpass 100 hours get a City Commendation signed by the Mayor.
- Ensure fast pruning in the winter accomplished by putting stakes in the bed and marking the pruning height with florescent paint prior to the event.
- Pizza nights or BBQ picnics to get 20+ Master Volunteers to come out and put 3 hours in the garden is a great way to tune up the garden prior to a busy public weekend, or when the garden is looking a little dreary. 4 Costco Pizzas = \$40
- Take photos and videos of volunteer days and post them on your web page. Easy to do with free software. Volunteers love to visit the site and see the event afterwards.
- Donations from local residents and corporate sponsors are helpful. Local nurseries, construction companies and home and garden stores may be key community partners. To date the FSJRG has raised over \$3,000 to help maintain the garden, and support their public relations and marketing programs.
- Send out regular emails or communications to keep volunteers engaged.

To learn more about The Friends of San Jose Rose Garden please visit:

<http://www.FriendsSJRoseGarden.org>
 Or contact either Beverly Rose Hopper (brhopper@gmail.com) or Terry Reilly (Terry@FriendsSJRoseGarden.org)



*To learn more about All-America Rose Selections please visit:
www.rose.org or contact Joe Foster (fosterj@ruderfinn.com)*



Beverly Rose Hopper and Terry Reilly
Founders – Friends of the San Rose Garden

Resources:

Master Volunteer Vests:

S. Freeman Company

<http://tinyurl.com/gardenvest>

Silk Screening

Francisco

Graphi X Stitch

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Similar to order # 1903 for FSJRG