



Pruning Roses in Yolo County

Why Prune: Pruning assists in the natural growth cycle of roses by replacing old weak growth (gray, rough bark canes) with vigorous new growth (green, smooth bark canes). Pruning permits good air circulation and induces the plant to concentrate energy into the growth of the remaining healthy shoots. Failure to prune results in twiggy growth; the weaker plant may be unable to support large blooms.

Equipment: A pair of sharp hand pruning shears is necessary for making clean cuts; this will reduce potential for disease. A pair of long handled lopping shears and a fine tooth pruning saw to cut away stubs and canes from the bud union will also be useful. Use a 10% bleach solution to disinfect pruners. A pair of thick leather gloves or goatskin gloves prevents thorns from penetrating the skin.

Pruning Technique: When pruning cut at a 45 degree angle about 1/4 inch above a bud eye. Always cut to healthy white tissue. Whenever pruning, decide which direction you want new growth to go, which is determined by the direction that the bud points. Prune to create an open vase configuration. This allows for better sun exposure and increases air circulation by reducing stem congestion at the center of the plant. For masses of color, prune from 1/3 to 1/2 of last year's growth. For exhibition blooms, prune 1/2 to 2/3 of last year's growth. Hard pruning usually results in fewer but larger flowers.

Pruning Process: Cut away all dead and old gray canes; cut away diseased and damaged canes. Cut away all small twiggy growth. Cut away branches that cross over the center of the bush. Cut away sucker growth from the bottom of bud union. Cut or saw off all stubs from the bud union to enable new cane growth to come from the crown. Do not use a wire brush for stimulation of new growth as this may allow penetration of bacterial and fungal disease organisms. After pruning, remove remaining foliage and clean beds of any debris; crown should be free of mulch.

When to Prune: The best time to prune is from mid December through mid February. In years when temperatures seldom fall below freezing, roses bloom continuously. Therefore, prune and strip leaves to induce dormancy and an artificial period of rest.

Pruning Techniques by Rose Variety

Modern Roses

Hybrid Teas: Most hybrid teas are naturally upright, resulting in overcrowded stems in the center of the bush. The outer stems need to be shortened to healthy outward-pointing buds and central stems need to be removed to open the center. Remove canes that are 3 to 4 years old. Leave 4 to 6 healthy canes. Cut canes to a height between 24 to 36 inches from the bud union/crown. Remove diseased, damaged and weak growth. Cut away shoots less than a pencil in thickness. Remove unproductive and unwanted canes as close to the bud union as possible.

Floribundas: Floribundas are cluster-flowered roses. Leave as many healthy canes as possible, 6 to 10 canes on average. Because cluster-flowers are carried on long stems, there may not be conveniently located outward-facing buds to cut above; simply cut to the desired height instead, which should stimulate a dormant bud. Prune canes back by 1/3. Pruning to different lengths will provide continuous blooming. Central canes should be left longer with this technique.

Patio and Polyanthas: Prune while dormant. Remove twiggy, spindly, crossed canes and dead wood, leaving a structure of strong young canes. Shorten these by half their length.

Miniature Roses: Most miniatures are on their own roots; this avoids the risk of sucker canes. Prune 1/3 to 2/3 of plant down to strong canes. If the plant is growing poorly, remove only dead, diseased and damaged growth, as well as any crossing canes that are creating congestion.

Climbers/Shrubs: Leave 2 to 6 buds on each lateral cane. If the plant is very vigorous, remove basal canes that are older than 3-4 years. Leave as many canes as necessary to fill the space in which the roses are planted.

Old Garden Roses

Albas: Prune after spring bloom. Shorten shoots by 1/3. Cut out old wood.

Bourbons: Prune while dormant lightly removing dead and twiggy growth. Some of the larger arching bourbons can be trained as climbers, or pegged.

Centifolias: Prune after spring bloom. Shorten long new growth by 1/2. Remove spindly wood.

Chinas: These need very little pruning. Remove dead wood and lightly shape. Cutting the spent blooms is often sufficient for the first few years.

Damasks: Prune after spring bloom. Remove old wood to encourage new growth from the bottom and thin lightly. After flowering, twiggy pieces should be removed, and side shoots may be cut back 1/3 to encourage new canes to develop. The damasks bloom only on older wood, never on new growth.

Gallicas: The shrubs are stout-caned, densely suckering, and tend to arch with the weight of the blooms. Very little pruning is needed. Prune after spring bloom. Cut back long growth by 1/3. Remove old, dead, twiggy, crossed canes.

Hybrid Perpetuals: Prune while dormant. The larger ones are best when pegged or trained along a fence.

Mosses: One-time bloomers. Prune after spring bloom. Cut back new growth by 1/2 and to 2 or 3 buds.

Noisettes: Prune while dormant. Cut old and young wood back by 1/4. Remove spindly, crossed and dead wood. These climbing roses flower upon ripened lateral growth, so training to encourage lateral buds (forming on the side of a cane rather than at the end) is especially effective.

Polyanthas: Prune while dormant. Remove twiggy, crossed and dead wood, leaving a structure of strong young canes. Shorten these by half of their length.

Portlands: Prune while dormant, removing dead and twiggy growth. Summer deadheading will promote blooms.

Ramblers: Prune after spring bloom and only to keep to the desired size. Removal of dead and old wood will encourage new growth from bottom. These varieties bloom only on 2 or 3-year-old wood for the first time, then bloom from spurs for several years thereafter.

Rugosas/Shrubs: Very little pruning is needed except to keep to the desired size. If pruning is done after spring bloom, there will be a loss of hips. If pruning is done while dormant, there may be fewer blooms.

Species: Prune after spring bloom and only to keep the bush at the desired size. Removal of old wood will encourage new basal buds. Shaping can be done by removal of canes from the bottom or by shortening canes.

Tea Roses: These are slow to develop so should be pruned sparingly, just to keep them shapely and eliminate old wood. Cutting the blooms away is often sufficient for the first few years. Climbing teas should be encouraged to develop laterals along the canes; these laterals may be pruned back to 1/3 their length.

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