

Pruning Roses

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February is the time gardeners dream and make plans for spring. To make those dreams come true for your roses it's also time to prune.

Heavy early spring pruning is needed for hybrid tea roses, grandifloras, and floribundas to encourage new growth and more blooms, and to promote the health of the bush. Most antique or shrub roses need less pruning. Dead or diseased canes should be removed or cut back to healthy growth anytime of the year. In the antique roses shaping the bushes and shortening the canes by $\frac{1}{4}$ makes for a better appearing plant. This is best done in February or mid-March in most of Texas. Climbing roses and ones that bloom once annually should NOT be pruned until after they have bloomed. A light pruning in August, followed by an application of fertilizer and thorough watering will be rewarded with a beautiful show of blooms in the fall.

Use scissors type pruning shears because they make the cleanest cuts. According to Doug Welsh, Extension Horticulturist for Texas A & M in an article "Taking the Mystery out of Rose Pruning" you will also need heavy loppers, a sharp small saw, and leather gloves.

First, remove all dead and old canes, which are usually gray and scaly, by cutting straight across at the top of the rounded base. Cut suckers that have formed below the graft off at the ground.

Next remove "twiggy" growth and any branches that cross the center to allow good air circulation and control disease. Prune healthy canes by one-third, cutting at a 45-degree angle, just above a growth bud. A growth bud is the little knot where the leaves

will form. Prune where the growth bud faces the outside, so the new growth will face outward. Also if the rosebush has begun spring growth make sure to prune each cane back to a dormant bud, so you will have more roses this year.

When you are done pruning your rose bush will be about two feet tall with 4 to 8 canes.

For more information on pruning rose bushes see the February issue of the “Horticultural Update” on Aggie Horticulture website at <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/tamuhort>

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