

Cultural Notes for August - Pruning

Why do we Prune?

The reason why we prune is to have healthy plants, control growth, limit the size of the plant and remove dead and diseased branches which in turn will produce more flowers. You will be able to shape the bush and it will grow freely for many years to come. The development of blooms comes from pruning and also from feeding the bush. Over the years we have found that is no real right or wrong way to prune rose bushes, but some rules of pruning should be followed. Roses are very forgiving plants and as long as they are not damaged a rose bush will produce new flower bearing canes for many years.

When to Prune

Pruning will depend on where you live. If you experience frosty conditions as we do in our garden, delay pruning until August. Roses have traditionally been pruned in June, however, it is advisable to prune roses when growth is just beginning and in the lower mountains and mountains it is usually middle of July to early August. Pruning too early may result in the rose producing leaves too early if the weather is mild and can become stunted and burned if late frosts develop. We find pruning from the last week in July through to middle of August is the best time for us. However, it is best to trial your own garden as these are just suggestions based on our results.

Tools

Tools need to be in good condition and blades need to be sharp. A good habit to get into is to clean your tools between rose pruning. A wipe with disinfectant eg. Bleach, Dettol will assist the non-spreading of disease. Secateurs, pruning saw, leather gloves, loppers.

Rules for Pruning

- Remove all dead branches and twiggy growth.
- Open center of the bush.
- Remove up to one third of the length of all remaining branches.
- Try and find an outward (dormant) forming bud and prune with a sloping cut about 3-4mm (1/4inch) above it. Below shows where to make the correct cut.
- Try not to cut too far from the bud as this promotes die back of the cane. Always remove old growth (more than 3 years old). However, if this is all that is on the bush leave for another year. Remove cross over canes and open up the bush as much as possible.
- Leave water shoots. A water-shoot normally grows from the base of the plant at the bud union. It will form an important part of the plants structure for the next few years, so look after it. Stake it with a bamboo stake. - different varieties need different methods.
- Aim for 3-5 strong branches as the framework for your rose.

There are general three ways to prune:

Hard Pruning

- Not recommended for established roses used only for garden displays. If you need to rejuvenate an old bush or you are an exhibitor improving the production of exhibition blooms you would use this method. Roses will recover from hard pruning, however, it can rob plants of nutrients for new growth and this is quite visible if you prune floribundas this way.
- Miniature roses benefit from hard pruning.

Moderate Pruning

- Pruning method used on established floribundas. Most floribundas take quite a while to re-establish if pruned too hard.
- Used for most roses.

Light Pruning

- Not usually used as it produces tall spindly bushes with poor quality blooms.
- However, a rose such as Peace is usually pruned in this way as it does not like hard pruning.
- Used mainly on Climbers as the main canes carry the flowering stems. These are lateral branches coming and growing upwards from the main cane. Remove to a good eye about 4 – 6 cm.

Step 1

Firstly, take of the top part of the bush so that you can see the main bush much easier. Identify all completely dead wood and cut off; or cut it out; if you are able cut it right down to the bud union. Make sure the cuts are clean. Try not to make jagged cuts as you go along you cutting just above an outward-facing bud.

Step 2

Remove all thin spindly stems. Cut out cross over canes to open up the bush. Remove suckers from below the bud union by moving the soil away from the bush. Tear away in a downward motion. Try not to cut off the sucker as it will re shoot from the eye. Another way of doing it is to remove the whole bush from the ground clean away the soil and then remove suckers. This is an extreme way of doing it but it will work if the bush has many suckers and you want to save it. Trim up the roots and replant as a bare-rooted rose.

Step 3

Take a step back now and reassess the bush. Continue to clean and remove all unwanted growth. Only healthy good strong canes should remain and your bush should have a nice shape. Finally, go over the rose neatening your pruning so that you cut just above an outward-facing bud. After pruning remove all debris and leaves from the ground. Remove last year's leaves from the plant itself. Then spray the pruned rose and the ground around it with lime sulfur spray to get rid of scale and fungal diseases. Do this immediately as the spray burns new growth. However, you can spray with a more diluted mix two weeks later just to ensure that all fungal spores are eradicated. Be aware Lime Sulphur has a rotten egg gas smell.

