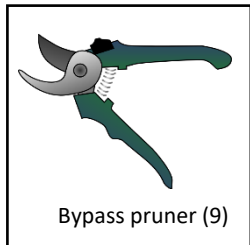


Rose Pruning by Christine Prins

Spring is on its way, and lots of trees and shrubs are beginning to wake up and bud out. One of these shrubs is the seemingly ubiquitous rose bush. But these aren't your average shrub! There has never been quite so much handwringing over pruning a shrub as with pruning roses. Rose pruning questions is one of the most common questions we get at the our help desks in the spring. Read on to de-mystify the pruning of the rose bush!

Why prune roses? The annual pruning maintains a healthy plant. It is an opportunity to remove dead, diseased, and broken canes. It will also stimulate new growth of your bush. Annual pruning will also help maintain the shape of the bush and increase air circulation. And perhaps the main reason to keep annual pruning on your spring to-do list: it will promote flowering!

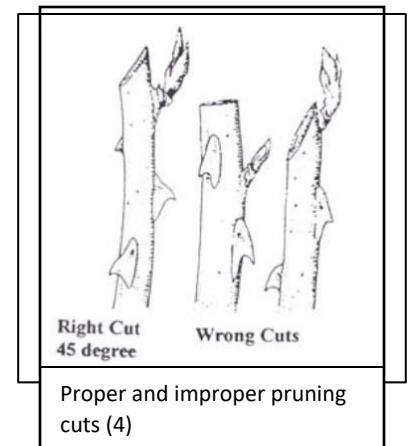
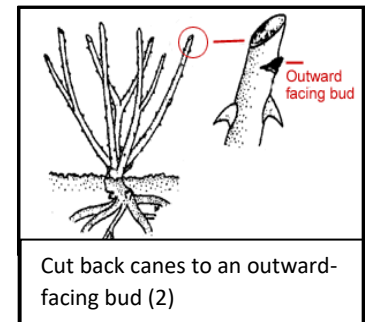
Next, we will cover the pruning tools. You will want proper personal protective equipment – good thick gloves! Roses have sharp prickles, so good gloves and long sleeves will keep your skin protected! The



main tool is a by-pass hand pruner that is sharp and clean. If you have many rose bushes, you may want to carry a small sharper with you. To maintain cleanliness throughout your pruning, bring a cloth and container of 70% isopropyl alcohol to frequently clean your pruner blade. This will reduce disease transmission from cane to cane, or from rose plant to rose plant. Depending on the size of the canes, you may also need a pair of bypass loppers, and possible a hand saw for old canes. The same rules for sharpness and sanitization apply for these larger tools.

Before you get ahead of yourself with pruners in hand, first you will need to know the type of rose you have. Different types need different amounts of pruning at different times of the year. But there are some general principles that are the same.

1. Remove the 3 Ds: all damaged, dead, and diseased, canes. The inside wood should be white and plump were you cut. If it looks diseased, you may need to cut the cane further down to cut out all of the diseased wood.
2. If you have a grafted rose that is producing suckers, cut the suckers back to the origination point from the root. If you just cut surface level, it will just encourage more sucker growth.
3. Encourage an open center to the bush. Cut back the canes to an outward facing bud. If you have canes crossing, remove one of them.
4. Use a proper pruning cut. Locate your outward facing bud, start $\frac{1}{4}$ inch above the bud, and cut at a 45° angle at a downward slant, away from the bud.
5. Deadheading of spent flowers can be done all throughout the season. If you like the look of rose hips on your plant for some winter interest, keep some of the faded blooms intact!
6. Do not cut on your roses after mid-fall. The plants need time to start hardening off for the winter. Pruning encourages growth, which is not what the plant needs when it is settling down for winter.



Now let's talk specifics:



Grandiflora rose
'Sundowner' (5)

Modern repeat bloomers (hybrid tea, floribunda, grandiflora, miniatures): These flower on the current seasons wood. These are pruned in the spring, usually a fairly hard prune where 1/2 to 2/3 of the plant height is removed. Remove the 3 Ds, and also the smaller, weak canes. Keep 3 to 5 healthy canes spaced evenly around the plant, like a vase. Cut these canes back to an outward facing bud. You can choose the height you want to prune back to (keep at least 12 inches), but the closer to the ground, the harder the prune.

Old-fashioned one-time bloomers: These flower on one-year old wood, and are pruned after they flower. Remove the 3 Ds and keep 5 to 7 strong canes intact (cut away weak canes). Don't cut these canes back to an outward facing bud – this is where the flowers will be next season! These roses don't require as much pruning for maintenance, and may not need annual pruning if the 3 Ds are present.



Old Fashioned
rose (6)



Climbing rose (7)

Climbers and Ramblers: Climbers are repeat bloomers and are pruned in the spring. Ramblers are one-time bloomers – prune them after they flower. The timing is different, but the pruning technique is the same: reduce side shoots to 3-6 inches long, and train the canes to grow more horizontally. Also removed the 3 Ds.

Species roses: flower on the wood produced in the current year. These you will prune in the spring. They require the least amount of pruning as they are the closest to wild roses. Remove the 3 Ds, and cut it back to maintain size.

As with most anything, practice will make this process much easier! Don't feel like one wrong cut will kill the whole plant – roses are very hardy plants that can handle some accidental chops in the name of practice. Happy pruning, and remember, our Help desk phone line and email are open if you have any questions!



Rosa woodsii a
species rose (8)

Resources used:

- (1) Colorado State University Extension PlantTalk: #1763 -- *Pruning Roses* : <https://planttalk.colostate.edu/topics/trees-shrubs-vines/1763-pruning-roses/>
- (2) University of Illinois Extension "Our Rose Garden" – *Pruning*: <https://web.extension.illinois.edu/roses/kinds.cfm>
- (3) University of Arizona Cooperative Extension "Backyard Gardener" – *Pruning Roses*: <https://cals.arizona.edu/yavapai/anr/hort/byg/archive/pruningroses2015.html>
- (4) Oregon State University Extension "Garden, Lawn, and Landscape" – *Pruning Roses*: <https://extension.oregonstate.edu/gardening/flowers-shrubs-trees/pruning-roses>
- (5) Image: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/ideonexus/3937900458>

- (6) Image: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/giftsoftheuniverse/21778304531>
- (7) Image: <https://www.needpix.com/photo/1401519/rose-brick-wall>
- (8) Image: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rosa_woodsii_\(5066496104\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rosa_woodsii_(5066496104).jpg)
- (9) Image: <https://freesvg.org/bypass-pruners>