

Pruning Roses

Probably no aspect of gardening causes as much needless anxiety as pruning — particularly the annual cutting back of roses.

The method of pruning differs slightly for each of the main categories of roses — hybrid teas, floribundas, polyanthas, miniatures, climbers, ramblers, and shrub roses — and they undoubtedly perform best when treated appropriately. But most roses flower well after only light pruning, as long as you follow the three basic steps outlined here.

Roses are pruned to maintain a healthy, well-shaped plant and to encourage the development of flowering shoots. Pruning methods vary because cultivated roses don't all replace their old and

exhausted stems in quite the same way, nor do they all flower on wood of the same age.

Basic pruning principles apply to all roses whatever their classification — bush, shrub, climbing, or rambling — and serve as the starting point for all surgery.

Pruning equipment

Sharp pruning shears cut most stems. Many experienced gardeners prefer two-bladed models, but single-bladed pruning shears with an anvil action are adequate if the blade is sharp. Cut thick stems with a saw or loppers; use a sharp

knife to trim the edges around rough cuts. Always wear sturdy gloves for protection.

When to prune

Most modern roses — notably hybrid teas, floribundas, and large-flowered climbers — bloom most heavily on the current season's canes. Cutting them back

▼ **Pruning tools** Essential equipment (clockwise from top) includes pruning saws, double-bladed pruning shears, loppers, single-bladed pruning shears, pruning knife, and gloves.



heavily in early spring actually encourages a better show of flowers a few months later. Although fall pruning is sometimes recommended, it is not a good practice in regions with cold winters; waiting until buds begin to swell in early spring allows you to identify (and remove) any dead canes.

Many old-fashioned roses, however, whose bushes flower once in late spring, bloom on canes produced during the previous growing season. Pruning them hard in early spring removes most of their potential for flowering in the following months. Instead, prune them right after they flower.

Deadheading

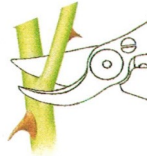
A form of pruning carried out during the flowering season, deadheading encourages a second blooming among repeat-flowering roses. For roses that flower just once, it will prevent the plant from redirecting its energy to the development of seed. Don't dead-head roses that produce showy hips — the display will be lost.

With hybrid teas, cut off faded blossoms above a strong outward-facing bud. Later in the season,

cut back to the first bud below the flower; at the season's end, take off the flower stalk. With floribundas, remove the whole spent flower cluster, then cut back to the first bud. To prevent them from spreading disease to other plants, dispose of these prunings.

Correct pruning cuts

Two kinds of cuts are used in pruning. When removing a complete stem — for instance, the weaker of two stems that cross — cut close to the base, then trim off any stumps. To shorten a stem, cut to just above an outward-facing growth bud or eye. Choosing such an eye ensures that the center of the bush won't be cluttered by crisscrossing stems. Vigorous types, such as hybrid teas, can be pruned hard — cut almost to the ground — each year. With ramblers and climbers, cut to an eye or bud that will grow in a direction suitable for training along a support.



The three basic steps

There are three pruning steps that apply to all roses, whether established or newly planted. Follow them routinely whenever you are planting or pruning. Many roses will need very little further attention.

1 Remove all dead, damaged, or diseased stems. Cut back to just above a bud on healthy wood or take out the stem completely, cutting back to a junction with a healthy stem or even the rootstock itself.

2 Remove weak or thin stems. These are unlikely to produce flowers, yet they will take away strength that the plant could put into other, better growth. Cut back to a joint with a healthy, strong-growing stem or to the rootstock.

3 Take out the least vigorous of stems that cross or rub. Either remove the whole stem or prune back to a growth bud below the point where the two stems cross. With ramblers and climbers, cut out some overcrowding stems and remember that training and tying will be needed to avoid rubbing. Always paint cuts with white glue to protect roses against stem borers.

		ROSE CLASSIFICATION		
TYPE	GROWTH HABIT	FLORAL CHARACTERISTICS	POPULAR EXAMPLES	
BUSH ROSES	HYBRID TEAS	Bushy, compact, 2-4 ft (60-120 cm)	Large, elegant, double, high-centered, to 4 in (10 cm) across, one or few per stem	'American Pride,' 'Crimson Glory,' 'Honor,' 'Fragrant Cloud,' 'Peace,' 'Tiffany'
	FLORIBUNDAS	Bushy, small, 2-3 ft (60-90 cm)	Cluster-flowering, 2½ in (6 cm) across, double or semidouble	'Angel Face,' 'Eye Paint,' 'Goldilocks,' 'Iceberg'
	POLYANTHAS	Bushy, small, to 2 ft (60 cm)	Cluster-flowering, to ¾-1½ in (2-4 cm) across	'Cecile Brunner,' 'The Fairy'
	MINIATURES	Bushy, dwarf, 8-12 in (20-30 cm)	Mostly double, up to 1 in (2.5 cm) across	'Angel Darling,' 'Gold Coin,' 'Popcorn,' 'Stars 'n' Stripes'
SHRUB ROSES	MODERN SHRUB ROSES Including Muskas and Rugosas	Medium to large shrubs, 3-5 ft (1-1.5 m), dense, vigorous, many good for hedging	Single or clusters, each flower 2-3 in (5-8 cm) across, very free-flowering; showy hips	'Constance Spry,' 'Champlain,' 'Golden Wings,' 'Roseaie de l'Hay,' 'Fruhlinggold'
	OLD GARDEN ROSES Including Albas, Bourbons, Chinas, Gallicas, and Hybrid Perpetuals	Medium to large shrubs, 3-6 ft (1-1.8 m), variable habit, often lax and open, suitable for general shrub plantings	Variable, according to parentage, double or single, some repeat- or perpetual-flowering, mostly 2-3 in (5-7.5 cm) across	'Rosa Mundi,' 'Mutabilis,' 'Konigin von Danemarck,' 'Paul Neyron,' 'Ferdinand Pichard,' 'Henri Martin,' 'Sombreuil'
	SPECIES/WILD ROSES	Medium to large, open shrubs, to 6-8 ft (1.8-2.5 m), often wiry or arching, good for mixed plantings	Usually single, with five petals, some semidouble or double, once-flowering; showy hips	<i>Rosa rugosa</i> , <i>R. rubrifolia</i> , <i>R. californica</i> 'Plena,' 'Canary Bird,' <i>R. moyesii</i> , <i>R. x harisonii</i>
OTHERS	CLIMBERS Including lower-growing Pillars	Scrambling, tall shrubs, 10-30 ft (3-9 m), permanent framework, little or no new basal growth	Large, borne singly or in small clusters, double, mostly 3-4 in (8-10 cm) across	'Blaze,' 'Don Juan,' 'Golden Showers,' 'Mermaid,' 'New Dawn,' 'Zephirine Drouhin'
	RAMBLERS	Scrambling, tall shrubs, 10-25 ft (3-7.5 m), with thin, flexible canes growing from base each year	Clusters or trusses, mostly single, small, to 1½ in (4 cm) across, best on year-old shoots	'American Pillar,' 'Dorothy Perkins,' 'Excelsa,' 'Veilchenblau,' 'Goldfinch,' 'Wedding Day'

If you buy a plant that is not dormant and has not been cut back, or you are transplanting a bush, you should prune as follows.

Hybrid teas and hybrid perpetuals must be pruned hard to outward-facing buds about 4 in (10 cm) above the ground. Prune floribundas less hard, to buds about 6 in (15 cm) above the ground; reduce dwarf varieties to 3 in (7.5 cm) above the ground. Hybrid teas and floribundas grown as standards can be cut back even more moderately.

Prune miniature rose stems to about 2 in (5 cm) high. Cut back the stems of polyanthas, such as 'The Fairy,' by about one-third.

Old roses simply need the basic steps. Remove about 3 in (7.5 cm) from the tips of species and shrub roses, climbers, and ramblers.

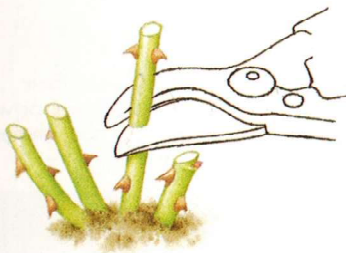
► **Reward for pruning** Annual pruning will ensure abundant flowers.



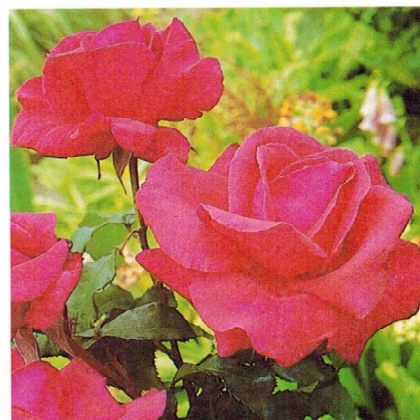
NEWLY PLANTED HYBRID TEAS



1 Carry out the three basic pruning steps — remove dead, damaged, diseased, and weak stems, as well as any that cross or crowd the center of the bush.



2 Cut all stems down to 4 in (10 cm) from the ground, above an outward-facing bud. This pruning encourages an open, well-balanced bush.

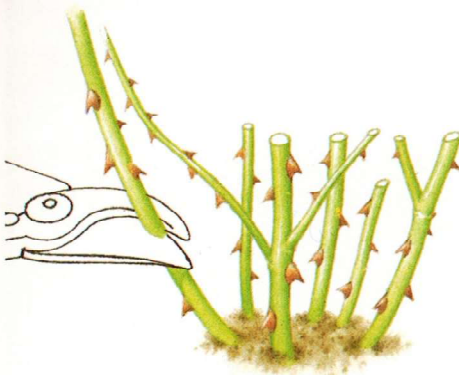


▲ **Hybrid tea roses** Hard prune hybrid tea roses, such as 'Fragrant Cloud,' during the dormant season to produce a balanced bush with shapely blooms.

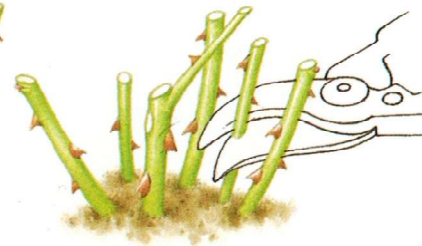


▲ **Floribunda roses** Reduce strong shoots on floribunda roses, such as 'Anne Harkness,' for a good framework bearing flowers throughout summer.

NEWLY PLANTED FLORIBUNDAS



1 Carry out the three basic pruning steps. Floribundas are more vigorous and free-flowering than hybrid teas, and need less severe pruning.



2 Then cut remaining stems down to outward-facing buds at about 6 in (15 cm) above ground level. Always use sharp tools and make clean cuts.

Pruning bush roses

The hybrid teas, floribundas, polyanthas, and miniatures, together with the standards derived from these groups, make up a large category of roses that you should prune in virtually the same way.

Reduce the stems of hybrid teas and hybrid perpetuals by about one-third their length. This moderate pruning is adequate to encourage a good garden display of flowers. Hard pruning to within three buds of the base results in fewer but better flowers.

Hybrid teas grown for exhibition are normally hard pruned. The very vigorous kinds may occasionally need hard pruning to check tall growth, which might get damaged in high winds. In the fall, trim the top growth of tall bush roses to prevent injury.



1 A bush rose in need of pruning will have a mixture of wood — dead or old unproductive stems, diseased and weak stems, and some that cross.



▲ **Miniature roses** Usually miniature roses, such as 'Anna Ford,' need only light or moderate pruning. Reduce main stems by a quarter in early spring.



2 Cut back a dead stem to the point where it meets a healthy stem. Prune any part of a stem that is diseased to just above a bud on healthy wood.



3 Cut out thin or weak stems to their point of union with a strong stem, or with the rootstock, to allow more nourishment to reach vigorous wood.



4 Cut out stems that cross or rub. Remove the weaker of the two, cutting to a growth bud below where they cross, to prevent a crowded center.



▲ **Bush roses** Prune polyanthas, such as 'The Fairy,' and floribundas less severely

6 Hard prune a bush rose every year if you want to grow large, well-formed blooms, though few in number. Always



5 Every spring, prune bush roses of average growth lightly to ensure a good display. In general, prune weaker varieties and thin shoots more severely than vigorous ones.

Pruning climbers

The pruning of the vigorous climbing roses and the shorter-growing pillar roses needs to go hand in hand with training them. These roses flower on the previous season's wood. Most do not send out shoots readily from the base — new wood appears higher up on the old stems of the leaders.

In summer, trim stems that have borne flowers back to a new bud. In winter, cut back main stems (or leaders) to vigorous new shoots. However, if no new growth has formed during the growing season, cut back leaders and laterals by about half. As far as possible, train new shoots to grow horizontally — this practice will stimulate the growth of flower-bearing side shoots.



1 With climbers, prune most heavily in early spring, just before bud break. Remove spindly wood, but retain a framework of new shoots for the current season's bloom.

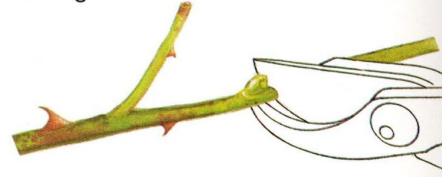


2 Prune again in summer after the climber has flowered. Trim back flowered twigs to selected new buds. Don't let hips form — they drain the rose's energy.

◀ **Pruning climbers** Prune climbers, such as 'Paul's Lemon Pillar,' in early spring. Cut out old stems and replace with new laterals.



3 In early spring, remove old wood, cutting back the leaders to strong new shoots.



4 If no new shoots have grown from a leader, prune it and its laterals by about half to encourage new side shoots.

Pruning ramblers

The ramblers are lax-growing scramblers that produce a single but profuse crop of flowers in summer. The long, flexible canes that develop from the base bear flowers in their second year.

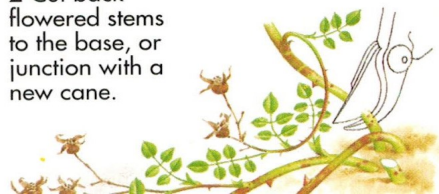
Begin pruning after flowering by carrying out the three basic steps. For those ramblers that produce new canes from the base, cut old flowered canes right out from the rootstock and tie in new canes to replace them. In some ramblers, the new stems spring not from the base, but from some point along an old stem. With these, cut back the old cane to the point where the new stem is growing away. Tie it in place.

The tangling vigor of ramblers can make pruning difficult. Cut out old canes in sections rather than in one piece.



1 Prune ramblers after flowering or as soon as new canes sprout freely.

2 Cut back flowered stems to the base, or junction with a new cane.



▲ **Pruning ramblers** True ramblers, such as 'Albertine,' have one glorious display, on canes produced the previous year. Flowered stems must be removed annually and replaced by new ones.