

PRUNING/DEADHEADING

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What is pruning?

Pruning could be defined as the removal of plant parts to achieve some effect.

What is deadheading?

Deadheading of roses is a form of pruning throughout the growing season of May to after the first freeze in the fall.

Why prune?

- **To shape the bush.**
- **To remove dead canes.**
- **To open the center of the bush to allow for air flow and prevent disease.**
- **To stimulate new growth.**

Dates to prune are variable from South MS to North MS.

- **So. MS – Valentines Day**
- **N. MS – George Washington’s birthday (Presidents Day) or later.**
- **Other pruning date suggestions – Jonquils blooming, Forsythia blooming.**
- **In the Starkville area we seldom have temperatures below 28 F after early March; therefore, little freeze damage occurs to new growth. This pruning date results in blooms the last week of April and the first week of May.**
- **After each crop of blooms (deadheading).**

What to do when starting to prune.

- **Gardening gloves**
- **Good quality pruning shears of scissor action type (examples: Corona – Felco 7 – Fiscars lopping shears) – NEVER USE ANVIL CUT SHEARS**
- **Sharpen shears**
- **Saw for canes larger than 1” and cuts near basal graft**
- **Disinfectant**
- **Sealing compound – such as carpenter glue or fingernail polish**

Fundamentals of pruning hybrid tea roses.

- **Pruning shears of the scissor action type makes the cleanest cut. Hold them so that cutting blade is down. (Fig 1)**
- **Make the cut of the cane so that it slants at about a 45-degree angle with the upper point of the angle about 1/3” to ¼” above growth eye with the lower point slightly above the eye on the opposite side. (Fig 2)**
- **Cuts to bud union should be flush to it. Any stubs may die back into union, allowing later entry for disease. (Fig 3)**

- Survey or evaluate plant to see what is needed. (Fig 4)
- Remove old canes that produce no strong growth, branches crossing through bush's center, weak stems (smaller than wooden pencil), broken and diseased canes. Remove twiggy canes that will not support blooms but use plant nutrients. Shorten remaining canes. (Fig 5)
- Survey plant for sucker growth and remove any found from the root below ground level. (Fig 6)
- Height of bush left after pruning is debated. In mild climates, healthy growth should not be reduced by more than one third, and *this is especially true if plant is on Fortuniana rootstock*. In areas where winter damage occurs, remove all dead and injured wood. This may leave bush only half to a third the size it was in fall. (Fig 7)
- Pruning severity varies. There is *Hard Pruning* used by Rosarian, showing specimen roses, who leave 3-5 canes 9" to 15" high. There is *Moderate Pruning* to leave 5 or more canes 18" to 30" high, which results in more numerous and smaller blooms than hard pruning. There is *Light Pruning* to remove the top 1/3 of bush growth and leaving many canes. This light pruning is often used with shrub roses and beds of miniature roses where I take hedge trimmers to get desired height and shape.
- Remove dead and diseased canes. (Fig 8)
- Remove spindly, twiggy, crossed canes. (Fig 9)
- Shorten the remaining canes to a height depending on cultural practice you desire. Carefully prune all canes to maintain a rounded form. (Fig 10)
- Example of before pruning and after pruning. (Fig 11)

PRUNING DEMONSTRATION OF HYBRID TEA ROSE

Pruning Miniature Roses

- Apply same basics as for tea roses.
- Should not be pruned to a height of below 12"
- Remove no more than 2/3 of the bush height
- Shape to fit your desired usage

Tree Roses

- Prune tree roses by about half of the canopy growth. This will encourage new growth and maintain the compacted rounded growth form. (Fig 12)

Shrub Roses

- Generally shrub roses are treated as you would treat any hedge, shearing off as much as the top third of the plant and some off the side if desired to shape the plant. If it is a single plant, a crown shape may be maintained. (Fig 13)

English Roses

- During the first two seasons, allow the framework to develop, pruning only the small spindly shoots. In the third season, prune smaller shrubs back by one-half and larger shrubs by one-third. (Fig 14)

Climbers and Ramblers

- **Pruning climbers uses many of the principles of pruning *dormant* tea roses. (Fig 15)**
- **Remove dead or diseased canes**
- **Remove oldest and weakest new canes or any suckers that may be present**
- **Retain 3 to 5 of the most vigorous new canes to be used to tie to supports**
- **Let two leaf buds remain on each flowering shoot**
- **Ramblers are pruned after flowering retaining 4 or 5 of the most vigorous new canes to be tied to supports. (Fig 16)**
- **Remove the weakest of new canes**
- **Tie canes to trellis or support (Fig 17)**

How to keep climbers blooming

- **Apply the previously discussed pruning fundamentals, and new blooms should occur in 42 to 50 days. (Fig 18)**

Summer Pruning (Deadheading)

- **This is the practice of removing spent blossoms after the blooming cycle has declined. Removing spent blossoms is always worth doing unless the hips – round seedpods that form on roses after blooming – that follow the flowers are part of the particular variety’s appeal.**
- **Cutting of old blossoms to divert nutrients and energy from seed production back into more leaves and flower buds.**
- **Cut back to a strong bud without removing any more leaves than needed. (Fig 19) Allow at least two five-leaflet leaves to remain on the shoot. Leaves are essential for power growth.**
- **Deadheading can keep canes from becoming leggy.**
- **Deadheading provides the opportunity to reshape the bush by removing excessive growth.**
- **Do not just snip or break off spent blossoms. Always leave two buds and two five-leaflet leaves when deadheading.**
- **In late summer, deadheading can be a practice of removing excess growth before winter, to eliminate broken or wind-damaged canes during the winter.**