

# PRUNING ROSES

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Roses are among the most intensively managed plants in many gardens. All roses need some type of pruning. If roses are not pruned for a number of years, plants deteriorated in appearance, and the flowers become smaller. The proper time and techniques for pruning roses are subject to much discussion among rose enthusiasts.

In general the best time to prune most roses is in late January (mild areas) to late February (colder areas) just as the buds are beginning to swell. Certain fundamental pruning practices pertain to all garden roses regardless of type:

- Always make your pruning cuts at an angle about ¼" above a bud that points toward the outside of the plant. The angle should slope away from the bud. A cut made at this point will heal rapidly and water will drain away from the bud (Figure 1).
- Remove dead canes to the crown. Dead canes will be brown and shriveled both inside and out. Also, remove all broken or damaged canes by insects and disease. Removing these dead and damaged canes is the first operation when pruning any rose. (Figure 2).
- Remove portions of canes damaged by frost. When you cut through a cane, the wood should be white clear through. If there is any brown discoloration, remove more of the cane.
- Remove spindly canes or those smaller in diameter than the size of a lead pencil. These tend to crowd the center of the rose bush.
- Remove any suckers. These are extra-vigorous shoots arising from rootstock below the bud union. Suckers should be removed completely, not just clipped off where they emerge from the soil. This can be done by moving the soil away from the trunk until you can see where the sucker is connected to the trunk. Grab hold of the sucker close to the trunk and pull downward to break the sucker off. This will remove any adjacent buds as well and prevent the sucker from growing back.

## **General pruning techniques for various types of roses:**

### **Hybrid Tea, Grandiflora and Floribundas Roses:**

Cut back between 1/3 and 1/2 of the previous years growth on all the canes you plan to keep (4 to 7 canes). The average pruning height for Floribundas and Hybrid Teas is between 12 and 18 inches, but taller growing Hybrids and most Grandifloras may be left at 2 feet. For most hybrids this means leaving between 5 to 10 buds per cane.

### **Miniatures Roses:**

Miniature roses are 6 to 12 inches high, with tiny blooms and foliage. Miniature roses do not need special pruning. Just cut out dead growth and remove the hips.

### **Rambler Roses:**

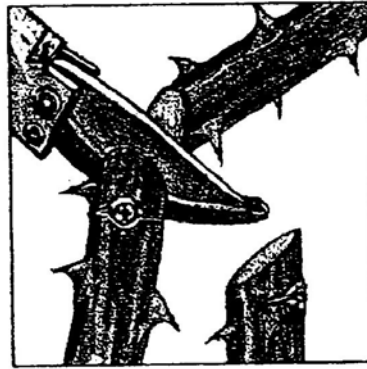
Old-fashioned Rambler roses have cluster of flowers, each usually less than 2 inches across. They often produce canes 10 to 15 feet long in one season. Rambler roses produce best on year-old wood, so that this year's choice blooms come on last year's growth. Prune immediately after flowering. Remove some of the large old canes. Tie new canes to a support for the next year.

### **Climbing Roses:**

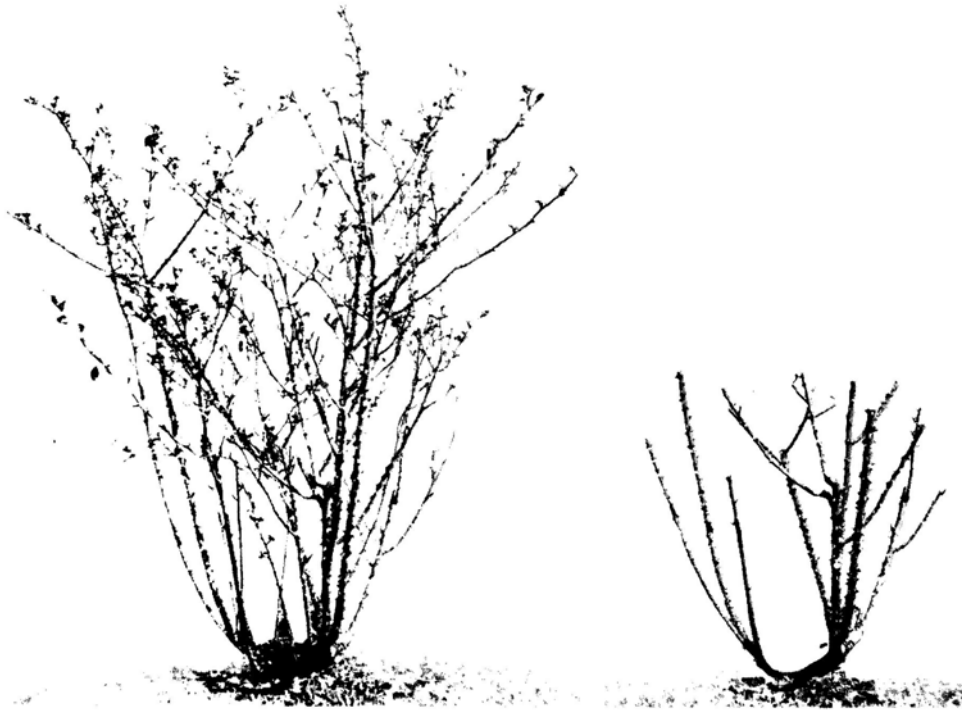
Large-flowering climbing roses have flowers more than 2 inches across; borne on wood that is 2 or more years old. Canes are larger and sturdier than those of Ramblers. Many flower just once in June, but some; called ever-blooming climbers, flower more or less continuously. Often this group is pruned in the autumn, any time before cold weather sets in. First cut out dead and diseased canes. After this, remove 1 or 2 of the oldest canes each season to make room for the new canes. The laterals, or side shoots, are shortened 3 to 6 inches after flowering. If the plant is strong, keep 5 to 8 main canes, which should be tied to the trellis, fence, wall, or other support. If it is not strong, leave fewer canes.

*Resources: UC Pest Notes Publication 7465, Sept. 1999; University of California California Master Gardener Handbook, Publication 3382, 2502; University of Arizona Gardener Handbook; Publication Number: 195022, 1999.*

Cut  $\frac{1}{4}$ " above dormant bud eyes that face the outside of the bush. New growth will come from these eyes.



**FIGURE 1**



*Left, rose bush before pruning. Right, same bush after pruning; all dead wood and weak growth have been removed and canes have been cut to a uniform height.*

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**FIGURE 2**