



An Invitation to Garden Beauty -- A Rose Pruning Primer

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That pruning time of year is around the corner, the time when an investment of time and effort in the rose garden can bring a big payoff in the spring and beyond -- your bushes will look more attractive and produce larger flowers. A good pruning can also shape them to the proper size for your garden. Bush health is also improved by the removal of dead and diseased canes, which stimulates the production of new growth through the emergence of vigorous new canes. Even if your bushes still have leaves and flowers, their complete removal is a chance to wipe away last year's problems and set a new path for the coming season.

When to prune -- The best time to prune roses is six weeks before the last expected frost in your area. The last frost date in Placerville, at 1800 feet, is April 15, so pruning should begin around March 1. Add a week for each additional 1000 feet in elevation; subtract a week for each 1000-foot drop in elevation. The danger in pruning too early is that it encourages the bushes to break dormancy, and then a heavy frost coming after a period of warmer weather can kill the tender new growth, setting back growth and flowering patterns.

Tools -- Use sharp by-pass hand pruners for most cuts; long handled lopping shears are good for thicker canes and give access to hard-to-reach places. A fine-toothed curved saw helps with the removal of the thickest canes. Make sure your tools are clean, sharp, and well-oiled before you start. You can apply household disinfectant spray as you move to a new plant if you feel that sterilization is necessary, but be aware that these products will corrode your tools. A pair of leather gloves reaching to the elbows protects from thorn pricks.

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Pruning Essentials -- Completely remove all dead canes (likely to be grayish or brown in color and shriveled), and canes that are less productive with a clean cut close to where they emerge from the crown at the base of the bush. Completely remove diseased or damaged canes, or cut them back to healthy wood at least one inch below the affected area so the inner wood (pith) is white. Remove all suckers coming from the root stock beneath the bush. Continue to remove growth that is smaller than a pencil, or which crosses or rubs on other growth, with a clean cut at the parent stem. Remove all growth headed toward the plant's center to discourage fungal diseases by improving light access and air flow. Select the strongest four to seven outer canes, likely to be smooth and green or bronze in color, to become the foundation for the next year's growth, removing any others. These canes will ideally be arranged in a vase-like shape around the open center of the bush when pruning is finished. Shorten the remaining canes on established hybrid tea and grandiflora varieties by one-third to one-half in length. Floribunda canes should be shortened by one quarter, with more healthy canes left on the bush. Direct new growth away from the center by making cuts at a 45-degree angle ¼ inch above a bud that faces upward and to the outside of the bush. Buds can be found at leaf attachments; some will look like red dots or green smiles, while others might already be pushing out.

Final Steps -- Remove and dispose of all remaining leaves, along with cuttings and fallen leaves and debris collected from under the bush. Make a heavy application of dormant spray or horticultural oil on a day when there will be no wet weather for at least 24 hours. Spray the bush and the ground beneath it to suffocate any remaining insect eggs or fungal spores.

Want to know more about the art of rose pruning? On Feb 10, 2021 from 1:00 to 2:30, join Master Gardener Eve Keener for an online workshop dormant rose pruning. Please register in advance for this popular class at <http://ucanr.edu/survey/survey.cfm?surveynumber=32830>.

Due to the pandemic, Master Gardener events will for the foreseeable future continue to be limited. We realize our public classes are valued by county residents and we are doing our best to provide virtual learning opportunities. You can find our new online class schedule at: http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu/Public_Education_Classes/?calendar=yes&g=56698, and recorded classes on many gardening topics here: https://ucanr.edu/sites/EDC_Master_Gardeners/Public_Education_Classes/Handouts_-_Presentations/.

The Sherwood Demonstration Garden is open on the first and second Saturdays of each month from 9 AM -12 noon. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the number of people allowed in the garden at one time is limited, and masks and distancing are required. Please check our website for more details https://ucanr.edu/sites/EDC_Master_Gardeners/Demonstration_Garden/

Have a gardening question? Master Gardeners are working hard remotely and can still answer your questions. Leave a message on our office telephone: 530-621-5512, or use the "Ask a Master Gardener" option on our website: mgeldorado.ucanr.edu. We'll get back to you! Master Gardeners are also on Facebook, Instagram, and Pinterest.

For more information on the UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County, see our website

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at <http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu>. To sign up for notices and newsletters, see [http://ucanr.edu/master gardener e-news](http://ucanr.edu/master_gardener_e-news).