



University of California

Agriculture and Natural Resources

Master Gardener Program

Public Edition Newsletter from Merced Master Gardeners

Calendar for March

Mar. 14th Irrigation Workshop

Mar. 28th Grange Plant Exchange St. Patrick's on Yosemite 9-11

Dec-Jan Gardening: Turn compost, prune fruit trees, plant onions and garlic, amend soil for gardens with leaf mold. Compost last season's plants. Clean all fruit left on and under trees so insects don't overwinter. Feb: Start veggie seeds for March Planting. UCCE: 2145 Wardrobe Ave., Merced or as indicated.

Rose Care by Mary Brooks

Rose bushes will begin to blossom in the early parts of spring. In order to make sure that the rose bushes are in good condition and will grow in the ways and directions that you'd like them to, it's a smart idea to prune your roses late in the winter. When pruning, focus on removing old wood that died during the winter or that looks unhealthy. You can also prune to a greater or lesser extent based on how you'd like the rose bush to grow.

Cut branches at a 45-degree angle right above the buds. Any pruning cut should be made within 1/4 inch (0.64 cm) above an emerging rose bud. Cutting the rose branch at an angle near a bud will prevent water from collecting on the top of the cut. The main tool you'll use for snipping off rose branches is a pair of pruning shears, curved on both edges. If you're pruning thick stems near the center of the rose bush, use a long pruning saw or lopping shears, depending on how far you need to reach to make the cut.

Remove extra branches that are crowding the bush's center. One of the primary goals in pruning rose bushes is to remove any extraneous branches and stems from the bush that could impede the flow of air.

Cut off branches until you can see through from 1 side of the bush to the other with relatively few branches in your way. A rose bush that is gnarled and choked will have a poor air supply at its center. Consequently, the branches and buds in the middle of the bush won't grow.

Tear off suckers at the root with your hands. Suckers are small, unwanted rose growths which grow on to the roots of large, established rose bushes. If left to grow, suckers will drain away nutrients from the rose bushes. If you notice a sucker at the base of a plant, dig down through the soil until you find the place where the sucker has grafted onto the root. In most cases, you can use your hand to tear off the small suckers from the roots of rose bushes. If the suckers are more than 1/8 inch (0.32 cm), though, you may need to use the shears to cut them off.

Cut damaged branches 1/2 inch (1.3 cm) below the damaged area. Rose branches can be easily damaged during the winter by animals or people running into the bush or by winter winds snapping off branches. If you see any stems that are damaged, prune the stem. This applies whether the damaged branch is almost entirely severed already, or just slightly cracked. If damaged areas are not cut, they often lead to diseased branches.

Remove discolored branches with open lesions. Branches with lesions or discoloration are a clear sign of disease. The diseases that afflict most types of rose bushes are fungal, so you may notice patches of what looks like mildew creeping down the rose stems, or a red-mottled color on the stalk. Trim the rose stem at least 1/2 inch (1.3 cm) below diseased tissue.

After trimming potentially diseased branches, it's important to sterilize your pruning shears. Do this by spraying the blades with a household cleaner like Lysol, or by dipping the blades in isopropyl alcohol.

While pruning for dead and diseased branches can be done at any time of year, it's especially important to do during winter, before rose bushes "wake up" and begin to grow.