



Pruning Roses

Melissa King 23/06/10

Winter Pruning

Rose pruning isn't rocket science and often the simplest approach yields the best results. Here's a good general guide to pruning modern bush roses.

Tools of the trade: A good clean, sharp pair of secateurs, thorn proof gloves.

July and August are generally the best months for winter pruning:

- It doesn't matter whether the plant is old or newly bought, cut about 50 per cent off the top of the bush in a rounded shape. You don't need to be too fussy about how you cut it.
- Then take a good look at the plant and prune out any spindly wood (wood that is less than pencil thickness) Also cut out any old or dead wood.
- If you've got an old rose bush and it's looking really woody get your hands on a good saw and remove any old thick barky looking branches. Saw as close to the ground as possible. Remove the old woody stems every 3-5 years to reduce excess wood and encourage fresh new shoots.
- If you want you can try to open up the plant, to allow sun and air to penetrate the centre of the bush. You can do this simply by pruning to an outward facing bud, so the branches grow towards the outside of the bush. Cut a good centimetre or two above the bud to allow the stem to seal.
- Also keep an eye out for suckers. A sucker is a shoot that comes from the root stock. You'll be able to recognise it because the foliage will look different and it will shoot out from below the graft. Get a sharp knife and remove the growth as close as you can to where it originates (on the stem or from the roots below). Don't cut it off at ground level because it will just keep popping up again.
- Finish by raking up any old fallen or diseased leaves from the base of your plant, to reduce the chance of pest and disease spreading.
- As much as I don't like to recommend sprays, after winter pruning it's a good idea to spray the roses with a fungicide like Lime Sulphur or Bordeaux to give them a fresh disease-free start.

Tips:

- Make your cuts on a slant so that water runs off the wound (particularly branches thicker than your thumb)
- Use sharp tools, because jagged cuts provide entry points for disease.

- Healthy plants are less susceptible to pest and disease problems so give them 5-6 hours of sun and keep them well fed and watered.

Summer Pruning

In the past the emphasis has always been on winter pruning, but if you want the best out of your roses summer pruning is just as important. Simply use a pair of hedge shears to prune off 1/3 of growth in a rounded shape after each flush of flowers has finished.