

WINTER PRUNING OF ROSES

FOR A SPECTACULAR SPRING BLOOM

Mesa East Valley Rose Society

WHY PRUNE ROSES:

Winter pruning of roses is beneficial for both humans and roses. The beneficial results for roses are stimulating new growth where it is wanted, production of high quality larger blooms, rejuvenation by removal of non productive and old canes and shaping of the plant. The benefits to humans are both physical and mental. For humans it gets us off the couch and away from the TV into the garden, moving, bending, standing, looking, thinking, puzzle solving and as we prune isometric and aerobic exercise. Good pruning requires about ten percent knowledge and ninety percent gumption and guts. It is one of those things we do knowing that the reward for the actions taken pruning today will result in reward of beautiful flowers in two and three months with benefits through the year.

Good horticultural practices tells us that through good pruning the results will be that as the rose comes out of the winter semi-dormancy it will have improved plant vigor, growth of new canes and higher quality and larger blooms. Pruning includes the cutting back the plant height and number of canes, removing old, unproductive and dead canes, cross over branching and suckers growing from the rootstalk below the grafted union.

A rose bush that is not pruned will still to continue to grow and bloom, though its growth will not be as vigorous and stems will be shorter and the flowers smaller.

The most desirable bush form is an V or U with the canes growing from the bud union or ground, upward and outward with a slightly an open center. The perfect shape sometimes takes several times of pruning to achieve. The results of pruning should be with the following results in mind:

- Enhance the new plant growth and quality and quantity of blooms
- To achieve desirable plant form for good sun penetration throughout the bush
- Maintain the plant within the allocated space allowing space for growth between bushes
- Enhance the rose bush health and vigor

WHEN TO PRUNE:

In the Sonoran Desert mild climate roses become semi-dormant. Pruning in January allows us to push the roses into a more dormant stage, which improves the plants spring vigor. Winter pruning should be done from late December through early February. Pruning during the winter will mean that roses will begin blooming the end of March into April and May.

EQUIPMENT NEEDED:

Before pruning begins examine equipment, tighten and sharpen, and make sure to have the following readily available:

- Good leather or fabric thorn proof gloves with sleeves (Protection for hands and arms is a must)
- Pruning shears (bypass blade pruners are preferred)
- Loppers (for cutting older larger canes)
- Pruning saw (for cutting old growth canes inaccessible with loppers)
- Wire brush (to remove dead bark and debris from canes and the bud union)
- Elmer's wood glue (for sealing canes over ¼ inch to prevent cane borers)
- Container of alcohol or water/bleach (8 parts water/1 bleach to dip or wipe pruning tools with prior to cutting diseased canes)

PRUNING LEVELS:

- *Light Pruning* removes about 1/3 of the bush height and is the level usually done after summer and in the winter on first year new rose bushes. This level is frequently used for floribundas, shrubs and hedge roses.
- *Moderate Pruning*, removes about 1/2 the bush height and is the level usually done during the winter pruning.
- *Heavy Pruning* removes about 2/3 of the bush height and many of the older canes. There should be major reasons for heavy pruning and should be done only with the winter pruning.

PRUNING INSTRUCTIONS:

Examine the rose bush before pruning from a few feet away to looking down on it to determine the canes to remove and those that should be saved. Make cuts $\frac{1}{4}$ inch above an outward facing bud, one were the buds new growth will be in a direction that will not conflict with other roses or other features. Cut the cane at a 45 degree angle, sloping down away from the bud. Start pruning the bush from the outside cutting canes to the desired height and then remove twiggy small canes, crossing, and old growth or dead canes. Prune any canes growing into the center of the bush or crossing other canes.

Roses growing in containers should be pruned the same as those planted in the ground.

Examine the bush after pruning and give it a final touch up. Remove the leaves left on the bush. Apply the Elmer's wood glue to all canes over $\frac{1}{4}$ inch.

PRUNING DIFFERENT ROSES

- Hybrid Teas and Grandifloras are the easiest to start on and develop your pruning skills. They are tallest and with winter pruning should be pruned moderately. Follow the above instructions and in most cases prune to about 3 feet in height.
- Floribundas Polyanthas, Minifloras and Miniatures are pruned a little differently from hybrid teas. The bushes are more compact the canes are smaller and twiggy growth habit. Prune about $\frac{1}{3}$ of the height leaving 8-12 healthy canes, cut out all crossing canes and any dead or diseased wood.
- Shrub roses have different growth habits and sizes. Prune according to the growth habit, to shape and maintain it within its allocated space.
- Climbing Roses should be pruned to fit trellis, walls or fences. Learn the blooming character of a Climbing Rose before pruning, some bloom on new growth others on one and two year old wood. Remove any dead or diseased or old wood canes. Many climbers bloom on lateral canes growing from two to three year wood. These long canes should be trained by arching or tying them to a horizontal position. This will induce buds to grow and produce a flowering branch.

January 2, 2014

Marylou Coffman, Master Rosarian

Mike Jepsen, Master Rosarian

LeRoy Brady, Master Rosarian