

PRUNING HYBRID TEA ROSES

By the time you read this you should have begun the important chore of pruning. Actually, the subject is always appropriate because rose bushes seem to need constant trimming and cleaning of dead and/or unruly canes. Sometimes suckers appear as do dead shoots. So — here's the "scoop!"

First, all but the most casual and small (number of bushes) rosarians should have certain sharp, clean, and well kept tools.

1. Rose gloves: A brand of goatskin seems to shed prickles (aka thorns) the best. Nothing is more sore than an infected microscopic prickle tip imbedded in one's thumb or finger.
2. Sharp hand pruners: By-pass, not anvil, style: Felco, available at most garden shops, is the best. Several styles and sizes are available, even left-handed. The blades can be removed for sharpening or replacing.
3. Large, long-handled nippers: for putting muscle into cutting large canes.
4. Pruning saw: Also for large canes and close work. A carpenter's "jig saw" with small, replaceable blades works well also.
5. White glue: A drop of Elmer's wood glue on the ends of exposed canes will seal them from cane borers and other insect pests and "end rot."

Elsewhere in this issue is a picture of a rose bush with obvious cuts to be made and why. If you cut back some last fall, the spring pruning is easier. Actually, you are simply cutting out bad stuff and shaping the top and sides. If there has been some winter (or spring freeze) dieback of the tips of canes, EVEN IF THEY ARE LEAFED OUT, they must be clipped. And, that cut must be until the center of the cane is pure white — no brown showing! Do two or three canes this way and then simply even up the top of the bush to pretty much the same height for all canes. Of course, if one or two canes had to be cut extremely low, the rest of the bush should be dealt with logically.

The "even length of canes" is to prevent apical dominance. The bush, tree, etc., will naturally supply the most nutrients, and cause the fastest growth, etc. to the canes nearest the apex of the plant. Put another way, the tallest get taller!

One final point to be made is to clip canes slightly above a productive bud or otherwise obvious bud eye. On a nice green cane, you can detect a few obvious swollen spots, or even "pimples" where a bud will be coming. Cut at a slight angle above that point (if cane center is white) with the highest part of the angle on the side of the potential bud.

In a way, I guess rose bushes are like children. They need to be nurtured, protected, and taught to cope with their natural tendencies in a desirable way! Happy gardening!!

BLIND SHOOTS

Blind shoots are new growth that terminate without forming a bud. They are identified by the stem tapering down to a point with no sign of a bud in the center. If you had lots of lovely foliage when you pruned and chose to leave it on the bush, take a second look. If it is about the same length as when you pruned, look to see if there is a terminal bud. This lush green growth looks pretty, but will not produce blooms. Blind shoots are free loaders which suck energy without producing blooms, and provide a gourmet meal for spider mites.

Blind shoots indicate (1) freeze damage, (2) weak, aging canes, (3) poorly fed bushes, (4) a diseased plant. Any cane that has nothing but blind shoots will rarely produce anything and should be removed to make room for new breaks.

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