



Roses – Pruning

Introduction:

Roses are surprisingly easy to prune, in fact it can be one of the most satisfying jobs of the year. There are two main times for pruning roses, the traditional winter prune, when the plant is dormant, and the summer prune. The style of pruning and when you prune may vary a little on the type of rose you have. Following are some basic guidelines.

Winter Pruning:

The majority of roses are pruned in winter, the exceptions being rambling type roses that are not repeat flowering. These include the banksia rose and the cultivars, Albertine, Wedding Day and New Dawn. These varieties are best pruned straight after flowering as they flower on growth formed the previous season.

To begin with, make sure you have the appropriate tools; good secateurs, loppers and a pruning saw for larger growth. Begin by removing dead and diseased wood, and up to 1/3 of the old growth. Cut back as close as possible to the growth you are keeping. This removal encourages the development of strong new growth that gets cycled through every 3-4 years. This way your rose remains ever young! This is true of any type of rose that you are pruning. Make sure you disinfect your tools between plants to ensure you don't pass on any diseases or pests. Wipe with methylated spirits to do this. From here the methods of pruning change.

New School

The new school of thought on pruning shrub or bush roses is to reduce the growth by 1/2 to 2/3. Trim to a rounded silhouette. The main difference between this and the old school of thought, is that you don't remove the smaller twigs and it is not necessary to prune back to an outward facing bud. This results in a very bushy plant with a large foliage mass that is shown to result in prolific blooming, though bloom size may be reduced. This is particularly effective with floribunda, groundcover and miniature roses. This type of pruning can often be carried out with a good pair of hedge shears and has been adopted by many of the top rose producers across Australia.

Old School

The traditional method of pruning requires reduction of growth by 1/2 to 2/3. Thin out the centre branches and any growth thinner than a pencil to allow good ventilation through the centre of the rose. Prune to a healthy outward facing bud. Essentially you're trying to achieve an open vase shape. This results in a sparser, more open bush, with fewer but larger flowers. This method particularly suits if you are growing roses for picking.

Climbers

Climbing roses are not as daunting to prune as most people think. The easiest way to approach it is as follows. Think of the larger, thicker branches as the framework or foundation of the rose. These require little or no pruning if they are growing in the right position. Just remove approximately 1/3 of them each

year to encourage new growth from the base that will become the new framework. The smaller branches that arise from the framework should be cut back to about 5 buds. These become flower spurs. More of these flowering spurs will arise if you train branches in a horizontal manner.

Standard Roses

Reduce the head of the plant by $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{2}{3}$, cutting back to a healthy bud, removing any crossing branches. Remove some of the older stems to encourage new growth. The most important thing is to retain a nice ball effect when you step back and look at your handiwork.

Following winter pruning it is advisable to spray your roses with lime-sulphur. This is known as a winter spray and is used to help control pest and diseases. Horticultural oil can also be applied a few weeks later to control scale and other pests.

Summer Pruning

Summer pruning is used to maintain the size and shape of your rose. Often bush and standard roses in particular can look scraggly and open mid-season, and this helps to bush them up. It is traditionally carried out around Christmas, though there is no reason why you can't do it before or after this. Essentially you just need to prune the new growth back by $\frac{1}{3}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$. This encourages new growth to form. It is also advisable to prune any dead, diseased or crossing branches at this time.

Feed your plants after pruning with a good quality rose food like Sudden Impact for Roses, and they should be blooming again in 6-8 weeks. This is useful to know if you want to time a flush of flowers for a special event!