

Spring Pruning Roses 101.....An Annual Ritual

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The timing of spring pruning in the **Buckeye** district is predicated on where you live as well as weather conditions. The tried and true rule of thumb is that when the **Forsythia blooms**, it is time to prune your roses. This typically occurs sometime between early to mid April with rosarians in Cincinnati pruning as much as two weeks before rose growers in Ashtabula. Pruning too early is not recommended as pruning encourages growth. If you do so too early you may inadvertently cause your roses to suffer from dieback beyond where the rose was cut back to initially. Cutting sometime after the optimum time to prune is usually not a problem plus you will definitely be able to see the new growth.

One of the most important aspects of pruning is that of pruning shears which generally are either bypass or anvil blades. Bypass pruners are comparable to a pair of scissors with the anvil counterpart having a straight blade that strikes against a fixed surface that typically has a slot. Anvil type pruning shears are not recommended as they tend to crush canes and lose their sharpness very quickly.

Ideally, all experienced as well as new exhibitors will use a good pair of bypass pruning shears. We have tried several different types but highly recommend either Felco or Corona brand; both of which are very good at maintaining alignment and keeping a sharp blade. Both Felco and Corona offer replacement blades which should be considered after a year or two of pruning. Here are the websites if you are interested in either of these two pruners... <http://www.felcostore.com> or <http://www.coronaclipper.com>

If you ask three different rosarians about how to prune your roses, chances are you might get three different versions for accomplishing the same thing. For all intents and purposes there are two schools of thought regarding pruning; some advocate light pruning and others strongly encourage hard pruning. Exhibitors tend to support hard pruning as you will tend to have stronger canes which will support larger blooms. Rosarians that support light pruning are proponents of building the bush. Both methods work just fine.

Obviously, winter more often than not will dictate how much our rose bushes will need to be pruned. A cold harsh winter such as we have been experiencing in recent years suggests hard pruning but if your microclimate does not render significant damage to the roses bushes, you might want to consider light pruning.

In addition to pruning shears it is recommended that you wear long sleeved clothing and leather gloves as prickles will work their way through cotton gloves. Pruning Hybrid Teas and Floribundas is not rocket science but it does involve some common sense tactics. We suggest that you eliminate all canes that are less than pencil thickness and cut out any canes that are obviously diseased or damaged, leaving about six thick healthy

canes that you can begin to prune. Your purpose in pruning is not only to rid the bush of thin spindly growth but also to open up the center of the bush. If you have canes growing from the center you might want to eliminate them as they will curtail air circulation once the bush leafs out. Prune about one quarter inch above a swollen bud eye that is facing away from the center of the bush. The actual cut should slant away from the bud eye. The logic for this is that when it rains you want the rain to be carried away from the bud eye as opposed toward it. The canes should be cut low enough that only white pith is evident after the cut is made. If any brown or dark area appears in the center of the cut, you will need to cut lower. If necessary just re-cut to another outward facing bud eye until only a white pith remains in the center of the cut.

Remember, pruning large roses is not rocket science and it is almost impossible to harm a rose bush in the process of pruning. You might want to consider dipping your pruning shears in a bleach solution to disinfect them after each cane is cut. Do we do this...**NO** but then again with seven hundred plus roses we are not overly concerned about pruning to an outward bud eye either just as we do not seal the ends of each cane with Elmer's glue.

Pruning Miniature and Miniflora roses is very similar to that of Hybrid Teas and Floribundas. Our objective when cutting for the spring cut back of smaller roses is to remove all signs of disease and twiggy growth leaving most canes that are thicker than a pencil provided they are not crossing another cane or growing in the center of the bush. Our suggestion is if in doubt...prune it.

Climbers are unique in that they only produce blooms off of seasoned wood. As such your spring pruning of climbers should only be directed toward anything that is obviously either dead wood or diseased wood.

Immediately after pruning we suggest that you spray your roses which we will cover with our next article. As always if you have questions concerning this or previous articles, please direct your questions to either Richard at RJA4CPA@aol.com or Kristine at Beancounter30@wideopenwest.com.