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Principles of Pruning

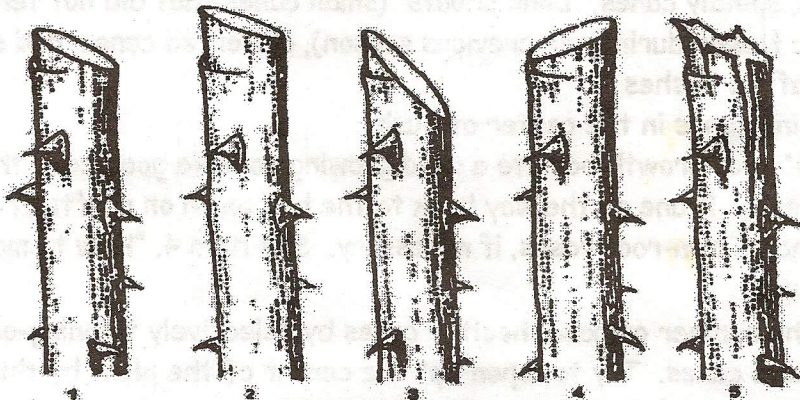
1. The main objective of pruning is to encourage and direct the growth of your rose bush to achieve the desired landscape design & maximum bloom potential.
2. Generally, the best time for winter pruning is mid February (or after your last hard freeze), before new growth starts.
3. The following steps offer an organized approach to winter pruning.
 - A. Identify good, healthy canes. Good canes are usually at least 3/8" to 1/2" in diameter, relatively young, active and free of disease. This is the growth you will try to save. Before cutting good canes, proceed to the next step.
 - B. Identify poor canes using the following criteria:
 - Dead canes (black or brown)
 - Diseased canes (brown or tan, with a purplish area near the connection to live wood)
 - Weak, spindly canes, "blind shoots" (small canes that did not terminate with a flower during the previous season), distorted canes, and suckers on grafted bushes
 - Crossing canes in the center of bush
 - C. "Thin-out" poor growth back to a good growing point (a good cane that you wish to keep). Prune all the way back to the bud union on grafted roses or to the ground on own-root roses, if necessary. See item 4. "How to make good pruning cuts".
 - D. Reduce the number of good, healthy canes by selectively thinning-out the less valuable canes. Try to "open-up" the center of the plant by thinning-out crossing canes, and distributing remaining good canes as equally as possible around the center. Actual number of good canes remaining will vary with the age of the bush, condition of growth, cultivar, cultural practices, and site conditions.

- E. Reduce the length of remaining good canes by cutting them back to the desired length, preferably at a bud that faces away from the center of the bush. The "finished" height of the bush depends on several factors including: your reason for growing roses (i.e. whether you grow roses for exhibition, landscape value, cut blooms, etc.), the rose type, and your desired result. As a general rule, prune 1/3 of the cane, unless you are removing a cane. Do not prune more than 2/3 of a healthy cane you wish to keep.

4. How to make good pruning cuts:

Many people worry about how much cane to cut back. Actually, this seems to be less critical than how the cut is made. Cuts should be clean and leave a minimum of cane behind to die or become diseased. When reducing the length of a cane, cuts should be made at a 45-degree angle, $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch above a good, live bud. When completely removing a cane, the cut should be made as close as possible to the healthy cane that it's attached to or the bud union on a grafted bush and to the ground on an own-root bush. In either case, do not leave stubs. Leaving stubs will invite disease organisms into the plant, which could seriously damage or ultimately kill the bush. About 90% of dead wood in a bush can be attributed to poor pruning cuts made during the winter pruning season. Study figure 1 to see examples of good and bad cuts. Good pruning cuts can be made with "by-pass style" pruners. "Anvil-style" pruners, which have a tendency to smash canes, are not suitable for pruning roses and should not be used. Keep your pruners and loppers sharp and properly adjusted so that they make clean, smooth cuts.

Figure 1. Examples of pruning cuts:



1. Correct cut, just above the bud and sloping away from it (about 45-degree angle), made with *sharp* pruners.
2. Cut made too high. Leaves a stub of cane to die and become diseased.
3. Angle of cut too sharp. The bud will probably die.
4. Cut made too close to the bud and sloping in the wrong direction.
5. Jagged cut made with blunt or "anvil-style" pruners.