



## A ROSE PRUNING PRIMER

Presented by L. Wiley

### Why Prune Roses?

- 1. To increase plant vigor.** Removal of the diseased, small and old (brown instead of green) canes will result in a healthier plant.
- 2. To increase and prolong flowering period.** Pruning encourages the growth of new canes. Since flowers appear on new branches, more flowers will be produced.
- 3. To train the rose to desired shape and direction.** Roses are planted for different purposes, such as an accent plant, hedges, climbers, ramblers, or in masses. In general, roses are pruned to have an open structure (urn-shaped) to allow the canes to grow slightly outward. This allows all the stems to get the maximum exposure to sunlight and air circulation.
- 4. To regulate flower size.** Generally speaking, the more and longer canes the bush has, the more and smaller blooms there will be. Conversely, bushes with fewer and larger canes generate larger flowers (esp. the Hybrid Teas and Grandifloras).
- 5. To promote safety in the garden.** With the exception of a few varieties, roses are prickly. Prune roses to keep the branches and their prickles from foot traffic and paths. [**Speaking of safety:** Tetanus is a danger to rose gardeners and it is recommended that they be immunized every ten years. Also, be alert to the fungal disease, *Spirotrichinosis*, which can be caused by rose thorn pricks. Watch for small lumps or bumps that are slow to heal or that turn into ulcers.]

### Tools Needed

There are several hand tools that are essential to rose pruning.

1. Bypass pruners for cutting small branches.
  2. Long-handled bypass loppers for larger canes.
  3. Hand saw for close cutting of canes.
  4. Leather gloves to protect your hands and arms. (Those with long leather gauntlets are best.)
- Optional: Sharpener for your pruners; kneepads.



## Basic Pruning Instructions for All Rose types.

Pruning for all varieties except once-blooming climbers is best done in mid to late February to remove dead growth and shape the plants. **It is important to remove all debris from your rose beds to help control disease.**

### Pruning specifically for:

#### HYBRID TEAS, GRANDIFLORAS, FLORIBUNDAS, MINIFLORAS, MINIATURES.

After **removing dead material** from the bush, choose three to five of the strongest canes and remove any canes crossing them. The most **desirable shape for a rose is urn-shaped**, open in the middle to promote good air circulation. Prune the remaining canes **down to about 12" to 15" from graft**. (Of course, you'll need to adjust that height in miniatures and mini florals.) After pruning large roses, it is recommended that the freshly cut canes that are larger than a fat pencil be **sealed with Elmer's Glue** to help deter cane borers.

#### LANDSCAPE/SHRUB.

After removing dead material, **prune back by about 1/4 to 1/3** and shape bush to desired shape.

#### OLD GARDEN ROSES.

Most experts agree that repeat-blooming OGRs should be **lightly groomed throughout the year rather than severely cut back in the early spring**. In fact, most OGRs don't like to be severely pruned: however, **dead, tangled or unruly growth can be removed** any time of the year. **Shaping the plant** and shortening vigorous canes by 1/4 - 1/3 of their length can result in more attractive and maintained plants.

#### CLIMBERS

For **repeat-blooming climbers** (those that bloomed after the first bloom in the spring), **prune old canes** to about where they are slightly thicker than a pencil. Then **cut each side stem that has flowered to the lowest possible five-leaflet stem**. This process will cause the cane to flower along its complete length. (For best results, the cane should be horizontal to the ground.)

For **once-blooming climbers**, **prune and shape only AFTER the first bloom cycle**, as they only bloom on old growth.

#### DEADHEADING

When blooms begin to fade, **remove at a 45-degree angle to the 1<sup>st</sup> 5-leaflet—or to the desired leaflet**. Make the **cut about 1/4 to 1/3 inch above the bud** (see below). This type of pruning can be done throughout the blooming season to encourage new blooms.

