

Get sharp about pruning roses

Pruning rose bushes is one of those spring duties that seems to create a great deal of confusion, probably because there are many different types of roses.

March seems to be the best month to prune roses, according to most rose experts. The exception to this is with once-blooming varieties, such as ramblers and old garden roses like "Alba" and "Moses." These roses are pruned after they flower. Hybrid tea roses bloom on new wood and benefit from early and often hard pruning. This entails removing up to one half of the plant's height and reducing the number of canes to between three and five. Keeping three to five healthy canes that are evenly spaced around the plant is the trick. These canes are then pruned back, leaving three to five outward facing buds. This type of



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pruning encourages the greatest flowering from hybrid tea roses.

The pruning process differs for shrub or climbing roses. Climbers are pruned very little, often just to remove dead wood and trim back lateral branches. Shrub roses are pruned mainly to maintain shape. No pruning is necessary during the first two or three years after a shrub rose is planted. Shrub roses bloom on mature wood, but not on old, woody canes. Each year remove one-third of the old-

est canes. Then, select one-third of the youngest canes that grew the previous season to replace the old canes. Over time, the young canes replace the old, allowing a continual renewal of the canes, and maintain plenty of mature wood to produce flowers.

For all roses, we want to remove dead, dying or diseased wood. Next, maintain an open center to encourage good air circulation. Roses battle many foliar diseases. Good air circulation promotes evaporation of water from leaf surfaces and reduces the incidence of disease. Finally, we want to shape and direct growth with our pruning. You do not want the plant to become a tangled mess of unproductive wood. How you shape the plant will depend on its location and your individual tastes.

For more detailed pruning tips contact your local OSU Extension office.