

THE PRINCIPLES OF PRUNING DORMANT ROSES

Proper winter pruning is essential for maintaining the health, structure, and bloom quality of your mature rose bushes.

Preparation and Safety

Before you begin, prioritize safety and cleanliness:

- **Safety First:** Wear proper gloves and eye protection.
- **Tool Care:** Sterilize and sharpen your pruning tools to avoid spreading disease.
 - To properly sterilize your pruning tools, wipe or soak the blades in a solution of household rubbing alcohol (isopropyl alcohol)
- **Initial Cleanup:** Remove all remaining foliage from the plant and clear the ground around it. Use a wire brush to scrub the bud union and remove loose, dead tissue.

Fundamental Pruning Techniques

Regardless of the rose type, several core principles apply:

- **The Goal:** To leave the plant with no crossing, diseased, or dead canes, and no suckers. Canes should open away from the center of the plant.
- **The Cut:** Make the final cut at a 45-degree angle, about 1/4 inch above a dormant eye (bud) that is pointing outward. This directs new growth away from the center of the bush, preventing canes from colliding.
- **Hard Pruning:** If a rose is a large, messy specimen that is difficult to navigate, you can start by shearing the entire plant back to a 2-foot height to create a manageable frame before performing detailed pruning.

Pruning by Rose Type

- **Hybrid Tea and Grandiflora:** These require an open center structure. After clearing out dead or crossing canes, prune to ensure that the remaining canes are spaced to allow room for new growth.
- **Other Rose Shrubs:** Some varieties like Iceberg & mini roses, may require less aggressive pruning than the standard hard prune used for Hybrid Teas. For these, focus on removing dead or weak wood and shaping the plant to maintain its natural habit, ensuring the center remains open for air circulation.
- **Climbing Roses:** For climbers, the goal is to keep the plant tall. Avoid hard pruning the main structural canes. Instead, prune back lateral growth by taking 10-15% off the top 1/3 of the growth, and continue pruning downward as necessary to maintain the desired height and shape.

General Maintenance Tips

- Always prune to healthy, living tissue.
- Remove all weak or twiggy growth from main canes.
- Remove any woody, old canes to encourage new, vigorous growth.
- Properly dispose of debris to prevent the spread of disease and insect populations

Post-Pruning Care

After pruning, it is time to protect the plant from insects and disease. Apply a dormant spray to kill fungus spores and suffocate overwintering insect pests and their eggs.

- ***See Star Note #120 Understanding Horticultural/Dormant Oil & Fungicide Spray Timing: A Key to Success***

Finally, prepare to apply a "Wake Up Rose Potion" to stimulate spring growth or fertilizer with **Dr. Q's® Rose & Flower Food**, a perfectly balanced rose fertilizer.

- ***See Star Note #605 Dr. Q's Rose Potion / Rose Mix***

For detailed instructions on planting and selection, please refer to ***Star Note #520: Rose Selection and Planting***

Need hands-on guidance? Be sure to attend one of our many Winter Pruning Seminars. To ensure you secure your spot, registration for our January winter pruning seminars begins in December at [StarNursery.com/events](https://www.starnursery.com/events). These seminars are hosted at select Star Nursery locations across Nevada, Utah, and Arizona throughout the month of January.