

pruning basics



Winter rose pruning is much easier than some experts make it out to be. Just cut back the bush all over and it will produce more blooms for you later on, and with a few well-placed cuts you can rejuvenate an older bush, too. Our simple steps show how it's done.

winter pruning

Rose pruning is easier than you imagine. Roses are tough plants and it's pretty hard to go wrong, especially if you follow our guide. Pruning rejuvenates plants, which respond by producing strong new canes from the base, more lateral growth, and more flowers. It also keeps rose plants down to a manageable size and shape. Most roses which flower throughout spring, summer and autumn can be winter-pruned. The exception is spring-only flowering roses, such as species or old roses, banksia roses and some climbers. These are pruned after flowering finishes in late spring or early summer. If you winter-prune spring-only flowering roses you'll lose the following spring blooms.



GOOD GEAR You will need clean, sharp secateurs, a pruning saw for cutting old wood, and long-handled loppers, which are good for removing larger branches. Wear sturdy gloves and long sleeves to protect your arms from scratching by thorns.

WHEN TO PRUNE Established roses are given a major prune in winter. In areas where frosts are non-existent or light, you can do this job in June or July. In areas with heavy frosts, delay pruning until August to avoid frost damage to new shoots. In warmer areas, prune after a flush of flowers finishes in midwinter.



BEFORE: (pictured right) our photos show how to prune a standard (or tree) rose, but the method is the same for bush roses. The aim is to remove about 60% of the overall growth, reducing the size of the plant, and removing any old, unproductive canes.



2. USE LOPPERS: using sharp long-handled loppers, cut out any old, woody canes right at the base of the plant. Loppers give clean cuts on larger canes, and the long handles offer protection from thorns. Older canes (three to five years old) are usually brown or grey in colour, and younger canes (under three years old) will be green or reddish, depending on the rose variety.



1. CUT OUT DEAD WOOD: remove any dead, unproductive wood (it looks brown or grey and is often shrivelled), cutting it back to the base of the branch, or at least back to healthy wood.



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3. USE SECATEURS:

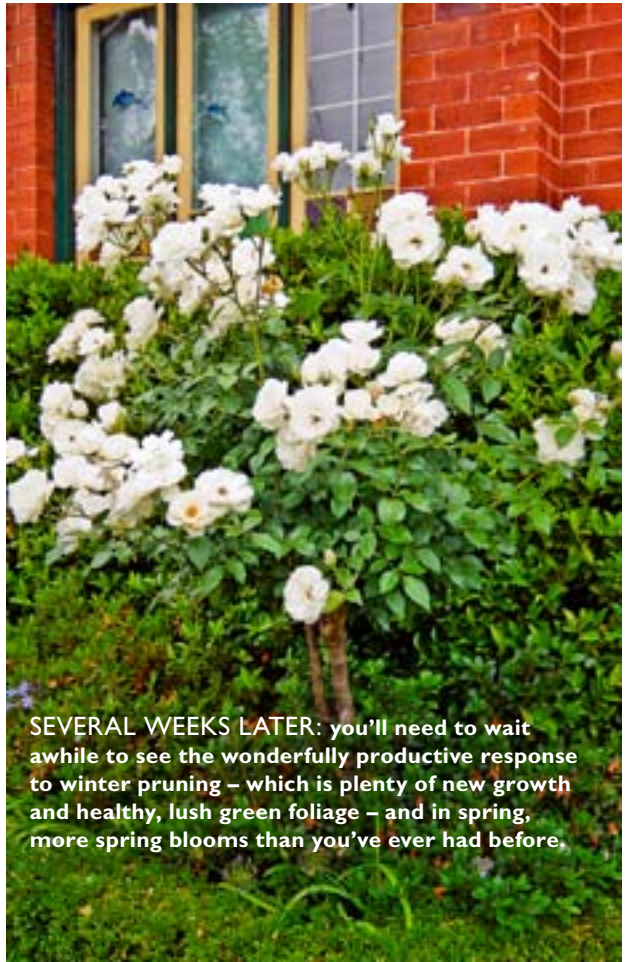
cut back remaining stems, including any weak, twiggy top growth, removing around 60% of the overall growth. Try to make your cuts to just above a bud.



4. OPEN UP THE BUSH:

aim for an open centre to the bush, which allows in sunlight and good air circulation. Remove any crossing canes or branches which will rub against each other and be damaged by wind.

5. AFTER: (pictured right) the finished rose should have an open centre, shortened canes, and plenty of room for new spring growth to develop. Directly after pruning it's a good idea to spray with a winter clean-up such as lime sulfur or Eco Rose to control over-wintering pests and diseases.



SEVERAL WEEKS LATER: you'll need to wait awhile to see the wonderfully productive response to winter pruning – which is plenty of new growth and healthy, lush green foliage – and in spring, more spring blooms than you've ever had before.