

IN THE GARDEN ...

January in the Garden by Jolene Adams

Have you ever thought about why we prune? Pruning improves the appearance of a rose bush, stimulates growth, aids in disease management and controls the quality and quantity of future blooms. Pruning removes the parts of the plants that are unproductive, dead, damaged or diseased (The Three D's).



By January, the sun is rising higher above the horizon every day and your roses will soon respond to this by starting to increase their metabolism and pull nutrients up from their storage roots and into the top part of the bush. Some rosarians like to strip any leaves still on the bushes a week or so before they start pruning. This removes potential infectious material (fungal spores, insect eggs, etc.) and makes it easier to see the swollen bud eyes where new growth is going to appear. Look at the stem of a rose – right where the leaf was attached you will see a small bump. If you pushed the leaf stem completely off, you will see the bump has a “smiley” face (the thin scar left by the leaf). The buds can be on all sides of the canes, usually alternating up each side as the cane grew taller.

Make sure to rake up all of the leaves and trash around the rose, otherwise that debris can also harbor the spores of mildew, rust and blackspot. Don't give those fungal bodies a head start – rake, remove, and then spray the ground with a fungal deterrent. You can use a mineral-based spray like copper, sulfur, aluminum or silver (Whoa! Expensive!!) dissolved in horticultural oil. Or you can use one of the earth-friendly sprays made with beneficial fungi and/or bacteria that will destroy fungal spores. They are also in a natural oily solution.

The tools you will need are: thorn-proof gloves, bypass shears, sharp loppers and a pruning saw (anvil type shears will crush or bruise canes, leading to infection). The time for our area is now until end of February into the first week of March.

Go out there, look the victim (er, the rose bush) over – cut out the dead stuff, the dying stuff, the diseased stuff and any canes that are trying to grow back through the bush and out the other side (no crossing canes allowed)!

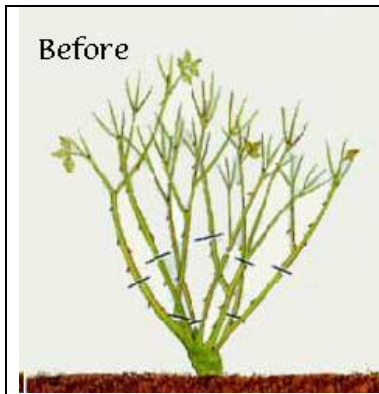
Apply a dormant spray to the naked canes after pruning and also again in February when you are all done. This is an oil and sulfur solution (or oil and copper) which will not hurt the leaf buds or the thin skin on the canes but will coat the stems and smother/kill any fungal spores that have floated into the garden while you were inside watching Netflix. Or maybe you were waiting for a warm day

Don't delay! Some folks in our climate and area of the East Bay start this process in late November – because the weather starts warming up (usually) after Christmas and the roses get “that urge” to grow whether you've pruned or not. If you don't bother to prune, you'll still have roses with long stems and some blooms but – they will have fungus on them very early because those little spores are germinating in the warmer days of late winter and into early spring. They'll also look funny with all those dead canes mixed up with the new ones trying to grow.

Who wants roses that the neighbors will laugh at??

And – hey! If you want to try rooting a cutting – choose one of the stems you cut off (a healthy one). It should be about the diameter of a pencil. Look for the bud eyes. Be sure you have three good eyes in a row – no skinny stems allowed. Cut each cane at a slant just a bit above the top bud you wanted. Now go to the bottom bud and cut a bit below it – also on a slant.

You now have a stick with three bud eyes. You are going to push the bottom of the cane into the ground (or a pot) about 6” away from ‘mama’, right past the bottom little bud eye and halfway to the middle bud eye (after you've cleaned up the ground, of course). If all goes well – and it usually does – the rain, your light winter watering, and the increasing sunshine is going to stimulate the cutting to put out some new growth from the middle and top bud eyes. The bottom eye is under the ground – no sunshine for him!! So that one will try to develop roots. Mama is also making leaves and will partially shade the little cutting. If it lives – you can pot it up into a one-gallon pot by the end of April. Be gentle – it's a baby!!



Cut where the dark lines are drawn - form a curve



Notice the stems left towards the middle are longer

Remember!

There are three things you do NOT want on your newly pruned roses - - -

Canes left on that are **DEAD**

Canes left on that are **DYING**

Canes left on that are **DISEASED**

The “dreaded” three **D**’s!