

Winter rose care

Winter is the time to act if you want beautiful roses in summer. It's time now to plant, prune and take precautionary action against pests and diseases.

Planting

Plant roses where they'll receive as much sun as possible, and plenty of air movement. Ideally, dig in compost and sheep pellets or blood and bone a few weeks prior to planting.

For winter bare root roses: remove the wrapping plus any material surrounding the roots. Prune off any damaged root growth, and then soak the roots in a bucket of water for an hour or two before planting.

Dig a planting hole twice the size of the root ball. Sit the plant in the hole with the graft (crown) at ground level. Fill around the roots with mixed soil and compost, firming it gently as you go. Water well to settle the plant into the hole, then mulch with fine bark or compost.

Trim newly planted roses with clean angled cuts, leaving about 3 – 5 buds from the base of each cane.

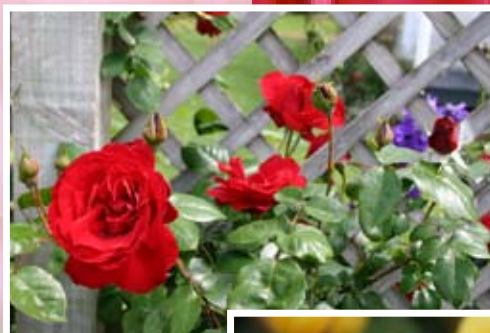
Pruning

July is the main pruning time for roses, but wait until August in cold climates. Using a clean, sharp pair of secateurs, remove dead or decaying wood first. Next remove the oldest branches and those crossing over each other or growing towards the centre of the bush. For most modern rose bushes the aim is to end up with three to five thick, well-spaced branches each with three to five buds. Be assured, it's hard to kill a rose by pruning it!

Shrub roses, such as flower carpet, are cut back in late winter or early spring. Remove a half to two thirds of the growth. This is easily done with the hedge trimmers.

Old fashioned, once-flowering roses are pruned, if at all, in early summer, immediately after flowering, as next seasons roses are initiated on the new summer growth. Resist pruning old-fashioned roses until after their third flowering season.

For more information on pruning roses go to www.gogardening.co.nz/postcards/roses2_final3.pdf



Winter clean up

Clear away all leaf debris and surrounding weeds which provide a refuge for the perpetrators of next summers pests and diseases. Don't place diseased material on the compost heap! After pruning, spray rose bushes and the ground around them with copper spray mixed with oil. The oil takes care of insect eggs while the copper kills disease spores. Oil also helps the copper stick.

Some gardeners like to spray with lime sulphur before pruning. This makes the plants drop their leaves quickly and will kill most overwintering pests and diseases. However, lime sulphur should not be mixed with oil or copper.

Tip:

When replacing a sick or weak rose remove a barrow load of soil and replace it with fresh soil from another part of the garden and mix it with compost.