

## “Clip Art” in the Rose Garden By Linda Krontz Schuppener, C.R.

I realize pruning can seem like an immeasurable task come spring, but pruning CAN be fun if you think it's fun!! Mind over matter – mentally excite your rosarian soul by reminding yourself that pruning is an important and necessary step in growing great roses with spectacular blooms! Pruning keeps rose bushes healthy, it encourages new growth, and generally creates a more beautiful bush – which we all strive to have in our gardens. The removal of dead, broken or diseased canes is essential to good growth. My personal pruning tip: turn on a radio tune and prune! Prune hard, prune light, but prune!

### When to Prune

Not all roses are created equal! With so many types of roses, the pruning technique can depend on the variety. Floribunda and hybrid tea roses need a heavy annual pruning in late winter/early spring (generally in Georgia around the first week of March), just as the bud-eyes break dormancy. The best way to decide when to prune is to look at the bud-eyes; when they begin to swell and turn reddish, go ahead and prune. In Georgia, a rule of thumb to remember: when the Forsythia is in bloom – prune!

**Special pruning note:** old garden roses and climbers that bloom only once a year should be pruned immediately after flowering. Do not prune these types of roses heavily in the early spring since they bloom on wood from the previous year's growth. Dead, diseased or damaged wood on ANY rose should be removed as soon as it is seen.

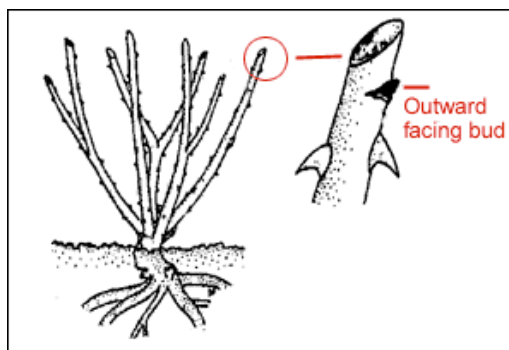
### Pruning Techniques

First and foremost to the pruning task - you will need sharp pruning shears; long-handled lopping shears; and a pruning saw for any large, heavy, old stems. Always use bypass pruners on your rose bushes. Of course, leather gloves will help protect your hands from the thorns, hence they are a necessary evil for the task at hand.

The first step in pruning roses is the same for all rose types. Remove all dead, damaged

or weak stems leaving only the most vigorous, healthy canes. When pruning, check to make sure the stems show no sign of discoloration (not to be confused with the normal purplish color of the canes during winter dormancy!) or shriveling. The center of the rose cane should be white/green and plump, not brown and withered. Keep pruning the cane until you reach healthy wood. If you prune down so far that no good bud-eyes remain, remove the entire cane. Cutting off the entire cane will only encourage new basal growth, so don't be afraid.

Your goal while pruning is to open up the center of the bush. As you prune, think of a vase shape. By doing this, air circulation will be increased,



thus helping prevent diseases. Since rose bushes send out new growth from the bud-eye just below a pruning cut,

try to make pruning cuts above a leaf bud-eye *facing out* from the center of the plant. Make a cut  $\frac{1}{4}$ " above the bud-eye and angled at the same angle as the bud-eye. If two canes cross each other, remove one of them.

Another aspect of good pruning is to dead-head the faded flowers throughout the growing season. This will encourage continual new growth on your bushes. Removing the dead flower by making a diagonal cut just above the next five or seven-leaf branch down on the stem above a strong bud-eye will produce a new healthy cane. Leave the hips on the bush after the last bloom cycle since the hips will encourage the plant to go into winter dormancy. Sealing all pruning cuts greater than pencil thickness with wood glue is a great habit to get into to help prevent cane borers from entering. If, however, you can't fathom taking the time to do this extra technique, don't worry about it. (continued on page 5)

## “Clip Art” in the Rose Garden *(continued)*

(continued from page 4)

### Pruning Different Types of Roses

**Hybrid Teas, Floribundas & Grandifloras:** These types of roses should be pruned in the early spring just as the bud-eyes begin to swell and show reddish color. When you prune, try to cut out all but three to five of the healthiest, most vigorous canes. It’s okay to prune these canes down to 15 to 18 inches from ground level. Generally, if you prune hard, you will get larger blooms, but less of them. Pruning weak canes that are smaller than the thickness of a pencil can only make a



better rose bush. In the late fall or early winter, if you have a bush that is tall, it is appropriate to cut those tall canes back by one-third to keep the bush and its root system from being blown in the winter wind. Otherwise, do not prune your bushes during the winter!



**Special pruning note for own-root roses:** These roses can be pruned back

HT, Pristine, before & after hard pruning. Photos by Cindy Dale

as far as necessary to reach good wood on the cane. If there is severe winter damage on the entire cane, prune it down to the ground. I have found that the root systems of own-root roses generally survive winter, and send forth beautiful new canes in the spring! These new

canes should not be confused with suckers that come from rootstock of grafted roses.

**Climbing Roses:** As with other roses, cut away all weak or damaged stems and remove the oldest canes, leaving five to seven strong canes untouched. Remember that flowers on most climbing roses are produced on stems that are at least one year old. The stems that you leave will bear next year’s flowers. There are varieties of climbers that do bloom on new growth. Therefore, you can prune these more rigorously.

When pruning large and tangled climbing roses you need to be careful not to damage healthy canes while removing the canes to be discarded. A good way to do this is to remove the canes by cutting them into sections and remove the sections one at a time.

**Old Garden Roses:** Old garden roses do not need the hard pruning that is needed by many other types of roses. A severe pruning can reduce flowering potential. Generally prune only about one-third of the bush, and remove only the oldest and unproductive canes. Most old garden roses bloom once in a season. To control their size and shape, prune them immediately after the bloom cycle.

**Miniature Roses:** Most varieties of miniature roses can be lightly pruned several times a year, since they flower on new growth. Try to shape the bush in a mounding fashion, leaving the center a little taller than the sides. Just like the pruning technique for hybrid teas, floribundas and grandifloras, it’s always preferred that the canes be pruned above an outward facing bud-eye.

### **\*\*Change in Pruning Clinic\*\***

Heritage Bank landscapers surprised and dismayed us by pruning the roses recently. Our pruning clinic will be moved to Walt & Linda Reed’s house at 821 Carnellian Lane in Peachtree City on **March 6th at 10:00 a.m.** It is still open to the community. Call the Reeds at 770-632-9907 for directions.