

How Much to Prune Back Roses

General Pruning Steps

Start by removing all old leaves from the year before so you can get a look at your rose bush and get rid of any hidden pests. Cut any old dead wood down as far as you can (if you cut into a stem and it's green in the center, it's not dead). You'll also want to cut back any stems that run horizontally across the plant because they can damage some of the others. My husband tries to make a bowl cutting away crossing branches so that sunlight can get into the roses. Your stems should always run vertically. Finally, prune any weaker or thinner stems. Some yard and garden experts use a pencil to measure. If the stem is thinner than the pencil, prune it back to the base.

There are a few different approaches to pruning roses, depending on what you want to get out of them and what type of rose they are. Newly planted roses should be only lightly pruned, if at all, their first year so they can spend more energy on establishing strong roots instead of growing stems and leaves. For older, healthy roses, you can experiment with any of the following styles.

1. A moderate pruning cuts the plant down to 18 to 24 inches high with 5 to 12 canes coming from the base. Do this if you want to improve the branching structure of your plants, which will encourage new growth and better flowering.
2. A severe pruning takes roses down to 6 to 10 inches in height and 3 to 5 canes. It is ideal for long-stemmed flowers like classic hybrid teas, or just to refresh any older plants that are not performing well. Keep in mind that some varieties may not bloom well right after being cut back this much. Instead, they may focus on regrowing stems that may not bloom until the next year, even if the rose would normally repeat bloom all season.

Climbing roses are an exception. If they've gotten overgrown, you can drastically reduce their overall size by removing excess canes at the base of the plant, but you should leave at least 3-5 canes and don't cut them shorter than 5 feet.

Floribunda roses

Shear Floribundas to a dome. Assuming you have a mass or hedge of roses, use your hedge shears. Make cuts through only the soft growth of last year, which are the thin green tips. You can't shear through woody growth, but you'll be shearing within a few nodes of it. In shearing, try to turn single plants into a

dome-like shape and hedges into long gently mounded shapes. This allows maximum light to hit all parts of the plant, which increases flowering. You're usually told to remove **dead, damaged, and diseased** wood first, but in the case of floribundas, which have a thick shell of prickly growth, shearing them first is easier and opens your access to the rest of the plant more. Now you need to get into the plant and remove the dead growth with your hand pruners, and loppers for larger wood. Don't try to use shears for this part; they can't cut wood. The colder your winter, the more dead wood there will be.

On the thinner growth, don't worry about making the usual proper pruning cut just above a **node**. Just cut. Nodes are so close and growth so prolific that it won't matter.

Floribundas have such an excess of growth every year that you should be aggressive. If something is weak-looking, cut it out. If it is crowded in near the top of the plant, or in the dense center, cut out a lot of it. If you have time to be a little more thoughtful, make cuts at varying heights, leaving growing tips at your top of the plant but also in its interior. Doing this annually will help you keep the plant to size, as opposed to having it get slightly larger every year.

Knock Out Roses (Shrub Roses)

The Knock Out group of shrub roses blooms repeatedly every five to six weeks throughout the growing season. There are varieties with both single and double flowers. The plants typically grow no more than 3 or 4 feet tall with a similar spread, and they tend to be more resistant to diseases than most roses.

- Always prune in early spring when new shoots are beginning to form on the canes.
- Prune to about a third of the desired final size. Knock Out roses typically triple in size after pruning.
- Remove dead or damaged wood when you see it.
- Every two or three years, remove a third of old growth to rejuvenate the shrub.

Remove Suckers

Suckers are thin, weak growth from the base of your rose, which is likely to have a graft union. You need to rip suckers off your rose.

Look carefully at the base of your plant. Suckers that sprout from the soil near the base of the plant are probably from the **rootstock** and must be removed. Try not to cut off the suckers. Ideally, rip them out by hand at the base. Ripping wounds the rootstock, making it less likely to resprout at that point.

Note: this step doesn't need to be done in spring, so if you can't be sure that the sucker is truly a sucker instead of a cane from your rose, wait. Let it grow, examine it in summer for different-looking leaves or flowers, and rip it out then.

Deadheading and Tidying

Deadhead floribundas with your shears. Just snip them a few inches below the spent group of flowers (remember not to deadhead beneath swelling flower buds). Deadheading Hybrid Teas is easier to do the Leaf Junction Method.

From time to time, a long cane will bolt straight out of your nice dome of blooms. Just cut it out as low as possible. There will be plenty more where that came from.

Your choice: consider ceasing deadheading at the end of summer. This will allow the remaining blooms to produce hips, the fruit of roses. On some roses, hips are an attractive feature that lasts through the winter. Also, some growers believe that allowing the hips to develop reduces winter kill of wood.

- **Leaf Junction Method**

Prune the old blooms off down to the first 5-leaf junction with the cane at a slight angle, 45 degree angle, leaving approximately 3/16 to 1/4 of an inch (0.5 cm.) above that junction. The 45 degree angle avoids leaving a collection for water. The amount of cane left above the 5-leaf junction helps support the new growth and future bloom(s). The cut ends of the canes are then sealed with a white Elmer's glue. Any white glue of this type will work, but not school glues, as they tend to wash off. The glue forms a nice barrier over the cut end of the cane to protect the center pith from cane-boring insects that will cause damage to the cane and can kill the entire cane and sometimes the rose bush. Stay away from the wood glues, as they cause some cane die-back. The first 5-leaf junction on the rose bush may be aiming in a direction where you do not really want the new growth to go. In such cases, it is fine to prune down to the next multi-leaf to cane junction. Pruning down to the next junction may also be advisable if the cane diameter at the first 5-leaf junction is small and may be too weak to support big new blooms. If a rose has a nice natural shape with good bloom and little disease, you can be very selective about your cuts.

- **Twist and Snap Method to Deadhead Roses**

Take hold of the old spent bloom and with a quick wrist action snap it off. This method may leave a portion of the old stem sticking up in the air that will die back, thus not really looking so pretty for a while. With some rose bushes, this method will also have some weaker new growth that does not support its blooms well, leading to drooping blooms or bloom clusters. Some rosarians have used this method for years and love it, as it is quick and easy.

Read more at Gardening Know How: Rose Deadheading – How To Deadhead A Rose Plant

<https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/ornamental/flowers/roses/rose-deadheading.htm>

Easy To Grow Roses

- Knockout Roses. Knockout roses are extremely popular, with good reason.
- Ballerina Rose. Ballerina Rose is appreciated for its masses of small, pink, single blooms. ...
- Zepherine Drouhin Roses. ...
- Mister Lincoln Roses. ...
- Carefree Beauty Roses. ...
- Mother of Pearl Roses. ...
- Graham Thomas Roses. ...
- Marmalade Skies Roses.