

# The perfect time for pruning roses

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Master Gardener

**Q**uestion: I have some rose bushes in my yard that are starting to leaf out. When is the best time to prune roses? Am I too late?

**Answer:** The best time to prune roses is actually this week, around President's Day in February. Another way to remember when to prune roses is when you see the yellow forsythia blooming.

Even though they are leafing out already, roses will thrive if you get tough and really give them a once-over with your pruners. It's important to know what kind



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**Rose bushes before (left) and after pruning.**

of rose you have to know when to prune them. Some roses, like ramblers, only bloom once in the year and shouldn't be pruned til after they bloom. Most roses that bloom all summer can be safely pruned in the spring.

To get started, step

back and take a good look at the bush. Look for any dead branches (which are called "canes") or those that are diseased or damaged. Prune those out all the way to the base of the rose. Then any stems that are smaller than the diameter of a pencil should be removed, as well as any that cross or rub against another cane. Also look for any suckers growing up from the roots below the graft area

– gently dig down to the root where the sucker begins and prune it off.

Next, pick out three to five healthy canes and prune them back 14-16 inches above the ground. Be sure and make your cut at a 45-degree angle, a quarter-inch above a dormant bud that is outward-facing.

A bud that is already growing will bloom very little. One key to healthy roses is to open up the center of the bush to allow good circulation and

reduce disease. When done, clean up and remove any debris left from the pruning.

This is how to prune most modern roses such as hybrid teas, floribundas and grandifloras. Some of the old-fashioned and shrub roses can be pruned taller than 16 inches, or one-third of the plant's height. By removing one-third each spring, you are continually renewing the rose bush while ensuring enough mature canes are present for lots of bloom.

Now is also a great time to plant roses, too. When purchasing a rose bush, look for green, healthy-looking stems. Any dead branches or dieback is a good indicator that the rose bush is diseased, so avoid them. Also check for circling roots or roots growing out of the bottom drainage holes, which indicates the rose is root-bound.

To plant a potted rose, dig a hole that is twice as wide as the pot and just as deep. Mix one-third organic compost in with two-thirds of the native soil from the hole you dug. Set the rose in the hole, making sure the graft is above the ground, and fill in with the compost/soil mix, tamping it down with your foot. Water well, and put some organic mulch around the plant up to 3 inches deep, being careful to keep the mulch away from the trunk. The mulch layer should be even, not mounded. With pruning,

fertilizer, and attention to pests and diseases, your roses should put on a beautiful show this summer.

*Do you have a gardening question? Please email, call, or visit the Douglas County Master*

*Gardener Plant Clinic at [douglasmg@oregonstate.edu](mailto:douglasmg@oregonstate.edu), 541- 672-4461, or 1134 S.E. Douglas Ave., Roseburg. Douglas County Master Gardeners are trained volunteers who help the OSU Extension Service serve the people of Douglas County.*

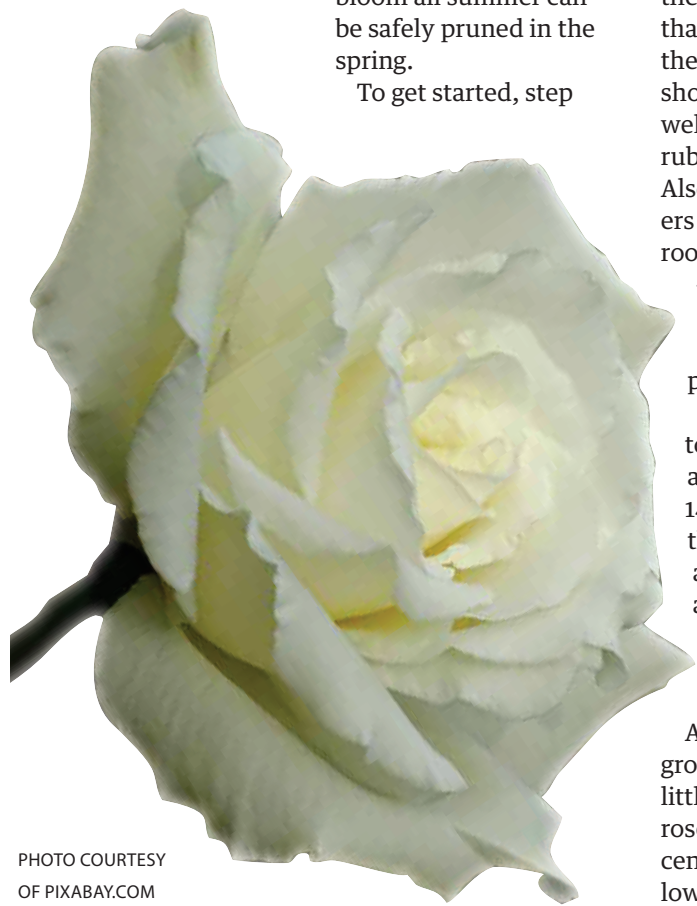


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