



**ACORN  
NURSERY**

PLANTS - GIFTS - CA

# TONY'S TIPS

## ROSE PRUNING

**DON'T FORGET....**

### **TONY'S ROSE PRUNING DEMONSTRATION QUEENS BIRTHDAY WEEKEND 11TH & 12TH JUNE AT 10AM**

All modern varieties of roses must be pruned regularly to maximise their flowering, increase their lifespan and improve their attractiveness. I prune Roses 3 times through the year but the main prune for most roses is the Winter prune. The lowest ebb of the roses growing season here is June 21st – the shortest day of the year. Because we don't have a cold Winter in Melbourne (at least not as far as the roses are concerned) then the main restriction on growth is the shortage of day length. I can already see rose growth slowing down now and it will continue to slow until the shortest day – Winter Solstice, when it will then start to grow away again. I will generally prune my roses in early June (some years even in late May if they are no longer an asset in the garden) but believe in our climate that the roses need to be pruned by early July at latest. In July (unless you are in a colder part of the country) we see the rose plants start to progress rather than regress and you want the new growth coming from the pruned frame rather than then cut off the new growth with a late prune. How much I prune depends on the vigour and type of the rose.

More vigorous roses shouldn't be pruned too hard otherwise the new growth shoots away like a mad thing and it has a messy, unattractive appearance with only a few flowers. We are always aiming for as bushy a growth as we can get. Normal bush roses I normally cut back fairly hard – reduce by about 2/3 to 3/4 or even more on my compact growing Friesia roses. If it is a vigorous bush rose i.e. Queen Elizabeth, Elena, Children's Rose, you are trying not to cut back too hard and are trying to have the vigorous growth divided between as many growing points (buds/shoots) as possible – i.e. prune back by 1/2 to 2/3 but to leave lots of shoots/branches or growing points. Very vigorous bush roses like the David Austins (which I call shrub roses) I generally prune back with hedge clippers by about half and treat more like a normal shrub than a bush rose. Because of its strong vigour you would rather 20 or 30 shoots of 0.5m each than 10 shoots of 1m+ and especially given that the flowers are on the end of the shoots. With vigorous roses I will often do a light controlling or shave prune on the vigorous new growth in August/early September to stop that wild growth and the resulting secondary growth is bushier, chunkier, more attractive and of course bearing more flowers. I keep thinning to a minimum as the more you thin the growth out the more energy goes into fewer remaining growth points and we get a smaller number of longer shoots with less flowers and messy, unattractive growth.

Climbers I again prune to shape in Winter back by at least a third, up to a half, but it also depends on its vigour. I prune to have as many growing points as possible and even then I will usually give them all a light shaping controlling prune in August/early September with hedge clippers to control the new growth, shape the plant and end up with a fatter, bushier, more floriferous plant in Spring.



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Standard roses are a formal way of growing a rose and should be treated as an informal topiary plant i.e. not as neat as a standard box or Camellia but not like some of the leggy, misshapen plants I see around. The flowers on a standard rose are meant to be at or below adult eye level so I prune the standard rose back to a ball shape in Winter (Volleyball to Basketball sized) and then to maintain shape prune lightly again when new growth is 150 to 200mm long to maintain shape. This is easier to do with the bushier floribundas i.e. Iceberg and harder to do with vigorous Hybrid Tea standards i.e. Just Joey but hopefully you get the general idea. I then prune again in late Spring and late Summer after each flush of flowers – each prune being 5 to 10cm above the previous prune. A lollipop shape is what we are aiming for, more or less. All of our modern and most of our old fashioned roses must be pruned to rejuvenate the plant, shape/neaten up the plant and to promote the new growth which in turn bears the flowers. The more bushy the new growth your plant has, the better it flowers.

The only roses I don't prune in the Winter are the early and once flowering roses. i.e. Banksia rose, Albertine, Wedding Day, Constance Spry and Rosa laevigata that if pruned hard in Winter will be forced to shoot away strongly in Spring with little thought to flowering. I give these roses a "neaten up" 5 to 10% prune in winter and give them a harder prune immediately after their Spring flowering. Lorraine Lee roses I give their hardest prune in February so that will maximise their Winter flowering. I feed my roses when the first shoots emerge in late July/August (that's when they need the food) with a high Potassium(more flowers, better disease resistance) organic Nitrogen(strong, steady sustained growth) fertiliser; i.e. Sudden Impact, Blooming Roses.

I feed my roses every 2 months from August to April. I expect them to work hard for me and will sustain that hard work with enough food and water for them to do their very best. Once a flower has finished I like to immediately cut it back by 20 to 30cm to stop a lot of wasted energy going into the hip or seed head but to ensure that energy goes straight back into a new shoot and subsequent flowers. Usually the rose is back in flower in 6 weeks. The worst thing you can do is not prune your roses. This will result in a messy unattractive rose with few flowers and a much reduced life expectancy.

I do my rose pruning demonstrations with hedge clippers (good ones) to show that a quick prune can be a good prune, much better than no prune. If you find once you have pruned that there is a lot of white stuff along the stems of your roses then that is scale which needs to be treated with Pest Oil. Spray comprehensively to cover and suffocate the scale and then repeat in a fortnight. If you have had disease issues in the past year on your roses spray over and around the rose bush with Lime Sulphur to clean up any overwintering fungal spores and insect and mite eggs. If you only sprayed once a year this spray will be the most effective, efficient and one of the safest!

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more tips!  
Regards, Tony

