

Roses – Pruning and Care

Based on the presentation by Dennis Dempsey to the Bi-Annual International Rose Congress Albany West Australia November 2018

The great Impressionist Painter Claude Monet once said his greatest triumphs were in his garden not on his canvas! Certainly something to think about.

The equally great Jazz Musician Louis Armstrong was once asked “Mr Armstrong What is Jazz”. His answer stunned the audience when he said, “If you’ve got to ask you ain't got it and never will”.

People who have “it” whatever it is are you in this room as you have travelled far and wide for the love of roses.

I do hope I can make your journey a little bit more worthwhile.

In 1992 the Australian Film Industry launched a new film amongst rave reviews called “Strictly Ballroom”. The film plot was based around the Pan Pacific Ballroom Championships but rumours were abounding that some members or contestants were about to introduce “NEW STEPS”?

Never before was there a hint of the horror of new steps in Ballroom Dancing - Strictly Ballroom –

We are now in 2018 and talking about roses, however we still are very afraid to introduce “New Steps”. We follow pretty much methods we are taught at technical Colleges or at Garden Centres or we learn from each other never questioning if these methods are correct in terms of what is best for the health of the rose we are working on.

In our garden we teach all staff to work on the “Four D'S”

Dead Wood, Diseased Wood, Damaged Wood and Diagonal or crossing wood

I am about to take you all this morning on a journey through my now six years at the Old Parliament House and National Rose Gardens in Canberra.

In our gardens we have in excess of 8,000 roses to maintain and manage, almost 800 named varieties, and in excess of 50 different types or styles of roses

In some cases the job is relatively easy with the 'Ladies Garden' having primarily Hybrid Tea roses, others such as Hybrid Musk, Wichurinna Hybrids, Rosa Floribunda, Rosa Noisette, Rosa Shrub, Rosa David Austin (Shrub), Rosa Polyantha, Rosa Large Flowering Climbers (Alistair Clarke), and Rosa Rugosa.

Primarily the care in this garden is carried out by our wonderful double team of Volunteers with full back-up from our own team of Rosarians

'Macarthur Garden' has extensive Trellised roses which are expertly pruned in winter by our own team. However again, most of the other work in the garden, including pruning of the China Roses (summer pruned), Rosa Tea, Rosa Noisette, are carried out by our dedicated Volunteers.

We also have a small bed of old remnant roses located behind the Clubhouse which holds many old unknown roses from days past. We welcome visitors comments and suggestions as to type.

The 'Senate Garden' varies in complexity from Rosa Floribunda to Rosa David Austin (Shrub Type) and a variety of climbing roses on three poled totems. This garden is also expertly maintained by a most dedicated team of Volunteers backed up by our Rosarians.

The 'Rex Hazlewood Garden' is the largest of the four gardens worked in by the Volunteers as it has over 1,200 individual plants. These are planted in three main groupings being East (China Roses), West (European Roses), and Centre (Australian bred Alistair Clarke roses).

Within the three broad groupings we have in excess of 50 different rose classifications or types from Rosa Polyantha to Rosa Wild Ramble

While this garden is expertly maintained by a wonderful team of Volunteers, it has taken nothing short of a huge effort to sort out the order of this garden over the past five plus years.

The Colour Code (traffic light) system was introduced to aid immediate knowledge of what to do for individual treatment of each rose.

Red - leave rose hips on (do not dead head)

Blue - prune in autumn

Yellow - prune in winter

Green - prune in spring/summer

Black - DO NOT PRUNE (only three roses in gardens with black labels)

Hygiene In The Rose Garden



All tools are disinfected with 50% methylated Spirits and 50% water between plants.

The Importance of Correct Cuts in The Rose Garden.

Top cut preserves 5millimetres above a live bud thus aiding healing of a wound preventing the entry of disease.

Lower cut is at a steep angle, bi-secting healing cells thus slowing or preventing the healing of tissue in turn allowing die back and again allowing canker to develop. When we think about the way we cut roses, I know that last Millenium, Last Century and four decades ago I was taught to cut "on a 45 degree angle away from most suitable outward pointing bud". The reason for the angled cut was always explained as "so the water can run off the cut and it will not rot

Forward Forty years and our staff are still being taught the same method to prune roses

In the 1960's when I started work in Canberra cuts to trees were done for convenience straight down the trunk of a tree when removing a limb. The wound left behind was oval shaped. It was in the 1980's the Arborists woke up to

the fact that cells that healed cuts were located in the ridge or slight bulge located in the crotch of a limb. Since that time methods have changed in tree work with the result that trees have healed rapidly through callousing in latter years while I can easily find cuts from the 1950's and 1960's that remain unhealed and indeed diseased.

Think about tree removal. We never approach a tree at stump level and perform a cut at a 45 degree angle. We always use flat cuts! If we are to destroy the tree the question arises "how soon after the flat bottom cut do we apply Glyphosate or Tree and Blackberry killer? An hour a day a week? Of course not, we do it within thirty seconds. Why? Well we apply the tree killer because the living tree begins to heal **within 30 seconds of a cut or wound**.

It is no different in soft wooded plants. Cuts begin to heal from wounds within thirty seconds of a wound. The twist though is that for healing to take place we must leave the cells on the plant to enable the plant to self repair

All roses have buds, if buds are not present there are dormant buds at all leaf scales. To enable cuts near these buds to heal say from pruning, dead heading we must preserve the 5 millimetres above the bud where the healing cells are located. Cut too high eg. 10mm to 50mm and the rose will die back to the nearest live bud causing "Die Back", which in time can turn into Canker. Cut too close to the bud less than 5mm the healing cells will be depleted thus causing "Die Back and Canker."





Spraying fertiliser on roses in OPH and Nationals Rose Gardens. Roses are foliarfed from both sides every 6 weeks

Old Roses Pruning Requirements

ROSE SPECIES	PRUNE IN	IMPORTANT	INFORMATION
1. Rosa Alba	Autumn	Rosa Albas should be left unpruned for the first several years to allow the rose to establish.	Prune to shoulder height, thin out only dead and crowding canes, remove all dead wood. If Height is not reduced these large roses will droop and fall to the ground causing management problems in managed gardens. In private gardens leave to spread to a more natural shape tying weaker canes back to stronger as necessary. Important: Alba roses flower on three year and older wood so keep a range of wood from young canes for replacement to old canes for flowering.
2. Rosa shrub type	Winter	All these roses require thought when pruning. . Shrub roses are pruned “up in the heads” rather than near the ground. Shrub roses are time consuming and must not be rushed.	Shrub roses come in sizes from small tidy roses, to David Austin type English Roses through the old Tea roses, to the giant shrub roses encountered in an old style garden. In general remove all dead and diseased wood, prune to shoulder height for taller plants, waist height for mid height plants such as David Austins and knee height for smallest plants, leaving each plant intact and well shaped.
3. Rosa Hybrid Gallica	Autumn	Caution: Gallica and Hybrid Gallica roses require special treatment regarding pruning. Poor pruning can ruin flowering on these roses for several year.	Species Gallica roses are substantially similar to Hybrid Gallica roses to prune. The main aim is to promote lateral growth for the next seasons flowers. Clean out old burned out canes, dead and diseased wood, cut back to waist high leaving a range of canes from old to young.

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4. osa Species Gallica	Autumn	Species Gallica roses are substantially similar to Hybrid Gallica roses to prune. The main aim is to promote lateral growth for the next seasons flowers.	Clean out old burned out canes, dead and diseased wood, cut back to waist high leaving a range of canes from old to young.
5. Rosa Centifoli	Autumn	Clean out dead wood, tidy to waist high, do not over prune but leave the plant neat and tidy. Centifolia roses resent over pruning so prune lighter in most cases.	
6. Rosa hybrid Chin	Late Winter	One very important issue with Hybrid China and China Roses is that they need to be cleaned out and cut back after five to seven years of light pruning.	This rose carries a lot of dead wood internally if not pruned back regularly. If continually pruned lightly year after year hedging will be the result. Very light pruning in August is recommended. Clean out centers, reduce height to about waist level, leave a tidy well formed plant. Remove all diseased and dead tissue. O
7. Species Rosa Moss (Old FashionedP	Autumn - Spring	Autumn Prune Prune to shoulder high after tidying center growth following flowering in autumn .	These roses need older stems to carry the new laterals for spring flowering. Laterals require a full autumn to grow so that they are ready for flowering in spring. If you have a Moss Rose that has failed to flower look back to the previous pruning for the reason. When pruning Moss rose think lighter rather than heavier. These old French roses do not like heavy pruning and will take several years to recover from a "Bad Prune". Keep amateurs away!
8. osa Old Garden Rose	Autumn	Clean out centres, reduce height to shoulder level or 1550mm 5foot. Leave plant tidy, but can be quite a large bush when finished pruning. Centers must be opened up to allow for air flow These roses if left unpruned become very "busy".Remove all old rose hips, clean up all old leaves.	
9. Rosa Spinossissima	Autumn - Spring	Lighter pruning is recommended rather than heavier. Having said that some of the lower growing roses can simply be shorn over with hedge trimmers.	Take out only crossing wood, dead wood, stubs, reduce to about shoulder height for taller growing shrub roses.Leave plant neat and tidy, ensure good airflow throughout.
10. Rosa Rugosa	Winter	Prune at the end of autumn. Caution- this rose species is very different in requirements to all others and requires special treatment.	Remove all rose hips left from previous season (leave on during flowering season) cut out only diseased canes. DO NOT REDUCE HEIGHT. It is sufficient to remove spent flowers at seasons end. The habit of this species is to thicket. Expect thicketing from this species in the garden so plant only in a section of your property where you have room for them to grow. If on the other hand you need to remove some of these roses from edges or outer gardens or to give to friends, they generally transplant easily, they are as tough as "old boots". I have seen on the other hand Rugosa Roses pruned badly, cut heavily causing them to fail to flower and of course fail to set hips in the following season

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11. Rose Bourbon	Summer – after flowering	Check again in winter	Thin out centers of rose, remove diseased, damaged and dead wood, reduce to shoulder height. However in general, Burbons should be left alone, except to cut back weak growth which stimulates new seasons flowering. Allow good air flow through center of the plant.
12. Rosa Polyanthus	Winter	Clean out rose of all busy wood, dead, weak growth, thin out rose to promote new wood for following season. This can be a tedious job but must be done for the continued health of these roses.	
13. osa Hybrid Musk	Autumn	<i>Requires special treatment!!</i> Hybrid Musks are best left unpruned apart from regular deadheading.	The habit of Hybrid Musk rose is to arch and spread so give room, leave canes long even if inconvenient to mow and work around in the garden. The canes of these magnificent roses can and indeed do reach 4 metres from the center of the rose bush. It is quite common to have 40 to 60 flower heads on a single Hybrid Musk rose cane, when simply left alone during the flowering season. Cut back the arching canes and you will get no flowers. Example “Buff Beauty”. Do not be concerned if there is crossing wood in a Hybrid Musk Rose. This is just normal to this species and should only be removed if it becomes diseased.
14. Rosa Multiflora	Winter	Prune continually during the growing season after each flowering. Rosa multiflora is a rootstock rose and as such requires special treatment in the rose garden. <i>Remember no prune no repeat flower</i>	Prune back after flowering (early spring summer) with hedge trimmers to promote repeat flowering You must prune Multiflora roses repeatedly throughout the growing season, otherwise there will be only one flowering. Unpruned roses will simply put out more green growth at the expence of second and subsequent phases of flowers. I have been soundly accused of “killing this rose” until the next spring when it was covered in masses of the most beautiful flowers. So when most if not all the flush of flowers die off shear over with hedge trimmers, and a fresh flush will come later in the season. We have had multiple flowerings from this method of pruning.
15. Rosa Species Rose	Aurumn	These roses are typically untidy in habit so we have to start by accepting that fact. In the end we will leave a healthy plant, without dead, diseased tissue, major crossing branches with good air flow.	When pruning this rose type thin out all old canes then cut back to shoulder high. Check for pests, diseases and remove all dead wood. However, let spread as wild roses should. These roses can be a delight in a very large garden. They are not difficult to manage.
16. Rosa Eglanteria	Winter	Prune out old canes, leave plant tidy at head height. As a wild rose I have found these roses hardy requiring only standard care. Most of the older roses resent sprays, strong fertilisers and so on. But they do like some light pruning, I always talk to them as I prune them. “Well that will make you feel better” I say to them as I open up the centeres an let light and air in. I then look around and am quite relieved to see no one listening	

ROSE SOECIES	PRINE IN	IMPORTAN	INFORMATION
17. Rosa Portland	Winter	As a hybrid between Gallica's and Damask's, (Historic Crosses.org) Portland roses can be expected to require only light pruning. With the heritage of this rose it would be inadvisable to thin out all old canes. However cut back rose to waist high ensuring all stubs, dead and diseased tissue is removed. And check if some two to three year old canes could replace very old spent canes. It is therefore quite strange that we have had some of the best flowering from these roses by the removal of aged wood leaving less than three year old wood in the plant.	
18. Rosa Damask	Aurumn	Caution Damask Roses require special treatment. Damasks bloom on old wood. It is essential to maintain old wood ensuring that diseased and damaged wood is removed. This will keep new wood growing to ultimately replace some of the older wood.	Open out centre of rose then reduce height to about shoulder level. Caution: Remove old wood at the expense of flowers for the next three years. It is important to encourage a range of wood from current seasons to older than three years to keep these roses flowering.
19. Rose Tea	Winter	Follow good practice leaving a healthy strong shrub behind	Prune back rose as for shrub rose, leaving the rose tidy in the head, with about five strong canes. Prune the retained canes forming a strong branching structure.. Check for damaged or disease wood, remove stubs. When completed the shrub should stand about waist high with a well pruned head, very unlike a hybrid tea rose. Heavy pruning will ruin shape and flowering.
20. Rosa Hybrid Setigera,	Winter	Train rose on trellis by cable ties to wires, removing busy extra branches which cross into the path of other canes, sparingly remove older heavy canes and allow younger canes to replace them. Otherwise R. Hybrid Setigera resent pruning. Heavy pruning will ruin flowering opportunities for several years.	
21. Rosa Sempervirens.	Winter	As with most old roses R. Sempervirens resents heavy pruning apart from thinning for health. Shaping, forming, crossing, diseased, damaged.	
22. Rosa Large Flowering Climbers Alister Clarke	Winter	Train in a fan shape on to trellis or wires, periodically remove older canes at the expense of younger canes, keeping a range of canes from old to new. Remove all laterals either pointing out or in, then prune all other laterals to TWO BUDS. Keep in mind a simple saying "tye to never through". The advantage of following that saying is that tyes can be cut, old canes can be removed then replaced with new. If on the other hand canes are allowed to weave through trellis frames or fences they can not easily be re	
23. Rosa Allister Clark	Winter	Smaller Allister Clarke roses (Polyantha type) should be pruned as for a wheel, maintain this unique shape for this rose only, keeping to good practice. Alister Clarke Hybrid Tea roses can be pruned as for Hybrid Tea roses in this document.	
24. Rosa Musk Climber		Train on wires, tie as necessary, remove some old canes at the expense of yonger canes, trim outward pointing growth to two buds. Prune lighter rather than heavier.	
25. Rosa Hybrid Moyesii	wINTER	A huge rose in any large garden if it can reach full potential. Essentially requiring just good practice. Clean out centres of roses then prune to two metres in height only if room is an issue. Ensure good air flow through rose as well as light penetration to the center of the plant	

ROSE SPECIES	PRUNE IN	IMPORTANT	INFORMATION
26. Hybrid Perpetuals	WINTER	These are a very large rose not regularly grown in home gardens. The practice of bending and shaping canes downwards promotes laterals and in so doing extends the flowering times.	A good method to bend canes is to fill small bag with pebbles or small stones, making a hook which is attached to a branch. Once a period of time passes another stone is added to each bag. Finally you will get a very pleasing result with a weeping rose. Pruning requires good practice, health, crossing, diseased wood removal, old spent canes. A requirement is good airflow to prevent disease and encourage flowering
27. Noisette	Early Spring	In Late August to Late September remove damaged wood. These roses resent heavy pruning. Laterals can be cut back by one third. Remember "light is right"	
28. Wichuriana Hybrids	Winter	These roses flower only on older wood then bloom from laterals. They can be grown on trellises. Older roses can become very "busy" so some tidying up is necessary. However do so very carefully under strict supervision as one of these roses can be ruined by a novice pruner. They are not forgiving	
29. Rosa Banksia	Spring - Summer	A rose that produces long canes that grow to immense sizes and flower only on 3 year old or older wood. Prune immediately after flowering removing only dead wood. Live canes resent being cut back and may die. Pruning may be required to keep rose in check. If you do need to prune a very large old Banksia Rose have someone who is very experienced check and give the ok, or supervise the operation or you may loose the plant	
30. Rosa Xanthina (Canary Bird)	DO NOT PRUNE	Canary Bird is a wild rose needing space to reach potential size. It should therefore only be grown in a very large garden. The grower will in turn be rewarded with a wonderful display of the first roses to flower in the rose garden, followed by dark maroon hips. This rose also has the most dainty foliage which is carried throughout the year to the delight of the rose lover. Only tidying of dead and diseased tissue is required as well as blowing leaves from under the plant. As a wild rose strong sprays as well as bein ing unneccary will be detrimental to this delicate rose.	
31. Rosa chinensis Viridflora (Green Rose)	Winter	A sport off Old Blush China 1856? A very easy rose to manage, prune by cleaning out all dead diseased tissue, open up centeres to allow good air flow. A very easy rose to transplant and propagate	

I do hope you have enjoyed this presentation. Please feel free to ask any questions, much of this presentation has been formatted from 6 years experience in the Old Parliament House Rose Gardens and National Rose Gardens as well as 40 years experience as a professional Horticulturist. I will do my best to answer your questions.

Dennis Dempsey
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