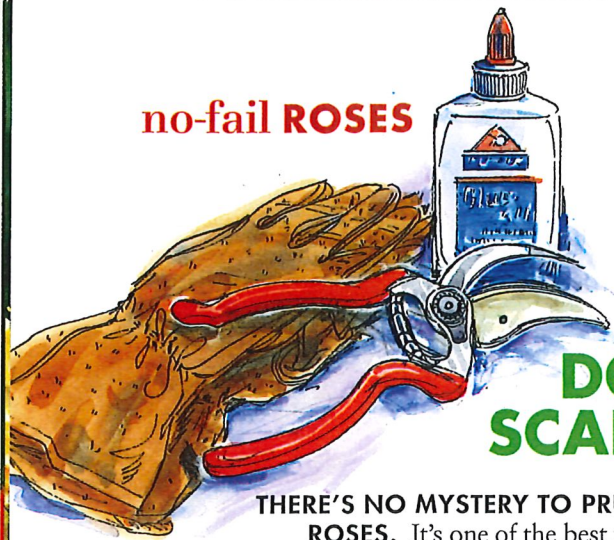


no-fail ROSES



DON'T LET PRUNING SCARE YOU!

THERE'S NO MYSTERY TO PRUNING

ROSES. It's one of the best things you can do for them. Removing old or weak canes opens up the center of the plant to increase air circulation, leading to healthier foliage. Pruning also removes dead or diseased wood, or branches that rub against each other. Lastly, pruning encourages new growth, which means more flowers.

ESSENTIAL TOOLS The first pruning essential is a sharp pair of bypass pruners (they give a cleaner cut than anvil types). To avoid spreading disease, disinfect your pruners as you work. A mixture of 1 part bleach to 4 parts water is a good disinfectant — dip your pruners into it between cuts, and especially between plants. You'll also need something to seal the cuts to keep rose cane borers out.

There are commercial sealers available, but a couple drops of good old Elmer's Glue-All® works just fine.

WHEN TO PRUNE When it comes to roses that bloom all summer, it's best to prune in early spring, before the leaf buds open but after the danger of severe cold is past. Don't worry about snipping out a branch or two any time during the summer, but don't do extensive pruning after the first of August.

Roses that only bloom once, like many old garden roses, usually bear their flowers on year-old wood. So prune them right after they bloom or you may cut off next year's flower buds.

The illustration at right shows you the four most important things you can do when you're pruning your roses. Now sharpen those pruners and dive in! □

troubleshooting ROSES

Easy-care as these roses are, there are a couple of common rose problems that might show up from time to time. Here are two frequent roses pests, along with some tips on how to deal with them.

Japanese beetles



SYMPTOMS Shiny bronze-green adult beetles are about 3/8-in. long. They bore into flowers and skeletonize leaves of many plants, but roses are a favorite. Japanese beetles are common in the eastern United States and parts of Ontario and Quebec.

SOLUTIONS If you see just a few beetles, pick them from plants in early morning or late evening when they're less active. A big infestation may need a general-purpose pesticide, but be sure it's safe for the plant. Don't use traps — they just attract more beetles.

To control the grubs (the immature beetles), try bacterial milky spore or parasitic nematodes (*Heterorhabditis*). Both come as a powder that you mix up and water into the soil.

Blackspot

SYMPTOMS Many roses are susceptible to blackspot, a fungal disease. In midsummer, you may see black spots with yellow edges on the leaves. As summer progresses, these leaves drop. A bare-stemmed rose isn't necessarily in danger of dying, but it doesn't look nice.

SOLUTIONS The best control is prevention. Start by planting resistant varieties like the ones mentioned here. Make sure your roses have good air circulation and plenty of sun. Blackspot overwinters in debris and infected canes, so avoid overhead watering and rake up and remove any fallen leaves.

If you do notice spots, begin treatment right away with a fungicide containing sulfur. Or try an organic mix of 1 tablespoon baking soda and 1 tablespoon horticultural oil in 1 gallon of water. Spray once a week, covering the leaves thoroughly. Apply at dusk or on cloudy days to avoid burning the foliage.



NO CROSSING ZONE

Remove these crossing, rubbing branches. You'll reduce the risk of damage to the plant and create a more open, appealing shape for the rose bush.

TAKE OFF TIPS In spring, trim off any dry, blackened, winter-damaged growth at the end of the canes. Cut just above an outward-facing bud.

OUT WITH THE OLD Older wood looks gray and woody, unlike fresher, greener growth. You can cut up to a third of the older canes back to the ground or the knobby base to encourage new growth. As you can see, some of these older canes are in the center of the plant, so you'll also be opening up the middle of the plant for good air circulation.

UNCOVER THE GRAFT In USDA zones 5 and colder, the graft should be buried 2 to 4 in. under the soil line. So in these zones, you probably won't see the actual graft. Just cut old canes off as low as you can — brush a little soil away first, if necessary. Most, but not all, shrub roses are grown on their own roots, but floribundas, grandifloras and hybrid teas are usually grafted.

