

MARCH ROSE CARE IN TULSA COUNTY

March is an exciting and *busy* time for planting, caring for and pruning roses. March 15th is the average date for pruning and removing the winter protection for your roses. However, a quick look at the upcoming weather is necessary as excessive freezing could affect your pruning. Early March usually shows roses starting to leaf out and side buds will start swelling.

Pruning hybrid teas is a must to get beautiful roses, as they bloom on new shoots from old canes. First, cut away any dead, diseased, or damaged wood. Cut all of the canes back to about 18" and keep the most vigorous three to four canes. Prune all others flush with the stump as small canes produce small roses. Prune for an open-centered plant by cutting just above an outside bud in a slanted direction, again to the outside. Make a clean, sharp cut. No need to seal! Rake all the material away from the base of the plant and discard it to prevent fungal infections. The bud union should be about 1 to 1-1/2" above the soil line. Gently loosen the soil around the plant and apply an organic fertilizer that will need to be scratched into the soil. As soon as leaves begin to emerge, you can start your spraying program with fungicides. Insecticides may be used when insects are first noticed, but many Rosarians are practicing Integrated Pest Management. This entails using mechanical and organic means for insect control. As temperatures heat up, applying a light dressing of mulch will help keep your roses cool, control weeds, and retain moisture.

Grandifloras, floribundas, shrub, and polyanthas require less pruning. Remove dead or diseased canes and shape and/or reduce the size of the plant as desired. Climbers are usually lightly pruned after spring blooming and also to train them to walls and trellises.

Roses like rich soil with lots of organic matter. They need plenty of water coupled with good drainage. They need adequate sunlight (minimum of 6-8 hours of full sun). They need protection against fungal diseases and insects. The soil pH should be about 6.2, which is slightly acidic. If you have had problems with your roses in the past and you have followed the above, then take a soil sample to the OSU Extension Center for a soil analysis. You may find that you need to lower the pH and/or add more nutrients to your roses.

March is also a good time for planting roses, especially bare-rooted roses. Please refer to the publication below for guidance.