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## **Pruning and Caring for Roses in January©**

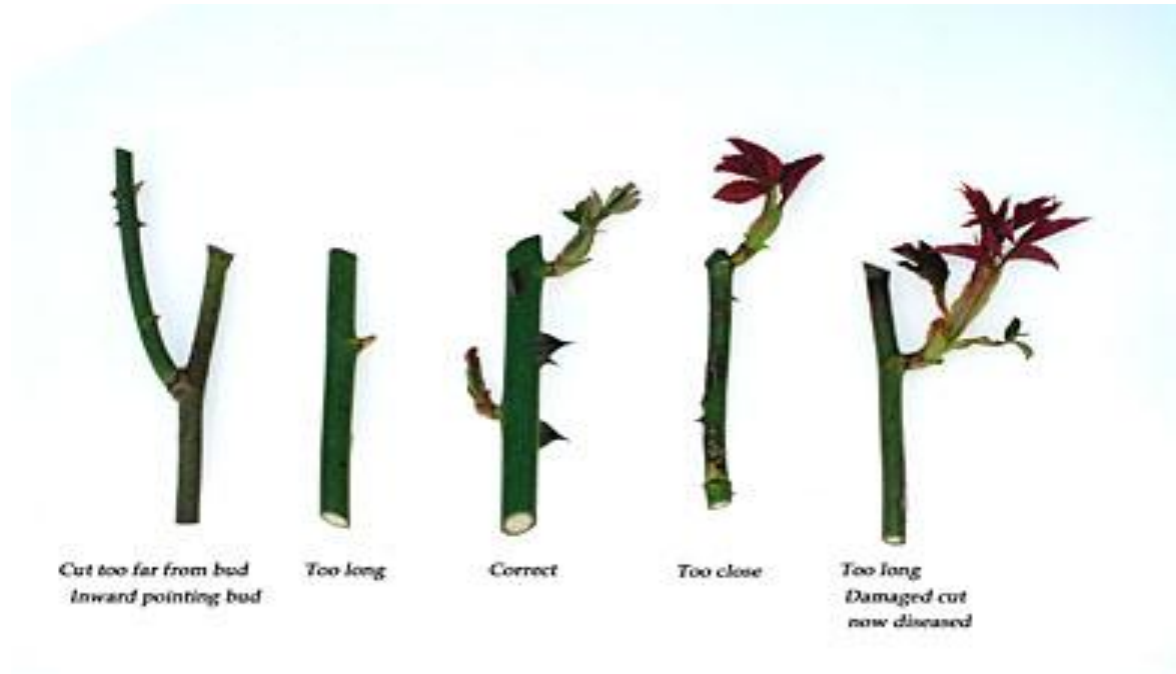
*By Tony Sarah, Horticulturist*

Early to mid-January is the best time for pruning and clean-up of roses in Tucson and surrounding areas. By now, temperatures should have been cold enough to send your roses into dormancy. If dormancy has not occurred because of fluctuating weather patterns and your roses are still actively growing, you can “force” them into dormancy by removing all the remaining leaves from your rose bush or climber. Gently remove even the new green leaves.

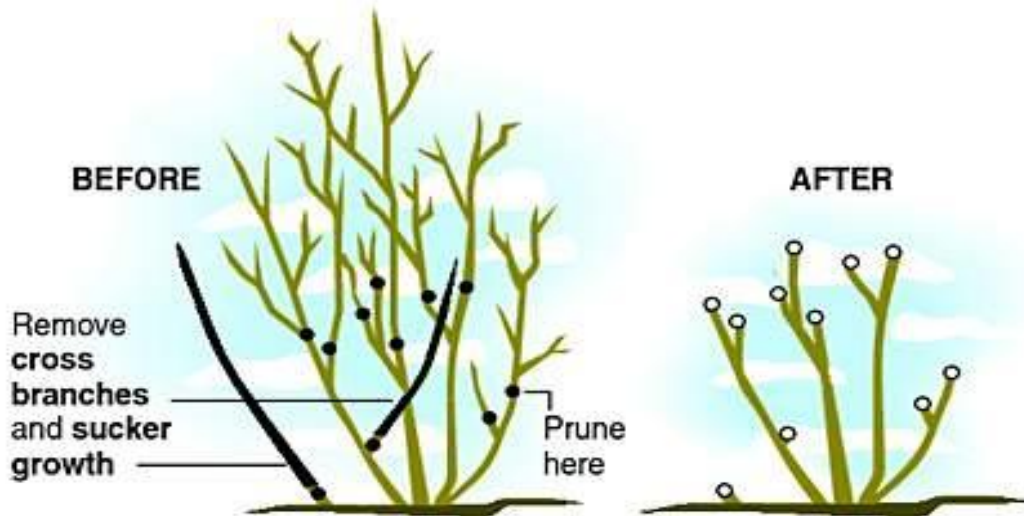
Rake up all leaves and debris from around your roses. Do not put the leaf litter in your compost! Disease and insects can be spread though out your garden by using infected/infested compost. Even the high temperatures required to break down the organic material cannot kill potential pests and diseases. Throw it all in the garbage or burn it. The purpose of this is to prevent any fungal spores from spreading disease such as powdery mildew or blackspot. Removing and disposing of the spent leaves and debris also helps prevent insects by removing places where they can hide or eggs can lie dormant until conditions are right for hatching in the spring.

Sterilize your tools for pruning by mixing a 10% bleach solution. You can dip your pruners in the solution or use a spray bottle to apply it. You can also use Clorox wipes in a pinch. Make sure to sterilize your pruners for each bush and after pruning canes that you know are diseased to prevent spreading. Your tools should be very sharp. Ragged cuts leave your roses open to disease, pests and freeze damage.

The way you make your cuts is an important part of the pruning process for roses. The cut should be made at a 45 degree angle, above outward-facing buds. The cut should angle up towards the bud side, about ¼” above the bud. See diagram on page 2:



**Bush Roses:** Prune established bush roses back hard. You will want to remove approximately 1/3 to 1/2 of the plant. Remove all canes that are crossing or rubbing against each other. Remove canes that are weak or diseased, and all dead canes. You should also remove unproductive canes and sucker growth as well, to promote stronger, more productive canes and prolific blooms. See diagram below:



You will want to keep an eye on the center of the cane after you make your cuts and if you see that the center is hollow, like a drinking straw, you have cane borers. Cut the cane back incrementally until you do not see any more signs of damage. Then cut the cane another three to six inches as the borer has usually moved past the point where you

see the damage and is continuing to bore through although it is not yet visible. If you do have borer damage, you treat against further borers by using either a systemic insecticide, or, if you prefer to stay organic, we recommend Fertilome® Borer, Bagworm, Tent Caterpillar & Leafminer Spray with Spinosad.



**Rose cane borer damage:**

**Climbing roses:** Climbing roses should not be pruned in the same way as bush roses. The main reason to prune climbing roses is to thin out dense areas that can harbor pests and diseases, and to maintain shape. There are two types of canes on climbers, the main or “primary” cane, and the smaller “secondary” canes which grow off the primary canes. Minimal pruning is necessary. The secondary canes are where your focus should be, as most of the blooms form on healthy secondary canes. Primary canes should only be pruned once they have reached the desired size, and then only to keep them at that size. See diagram below:



Fertilizing should not be done until mid to late February when temperatures warm up. You have several choices of fertilizer depending on your preferences. We recommend Grow More Magnum Rose Food applied once every 2 to 3 weeks during the active growing season (February-October) for conventional gardeners or Peace of Mind Rose Food applied once every 4 weeks during the active growing season for organic gardeners. If you choose to use a rose food with systemic insecticide, you can skip the application of a systemic insecticide in January and still stave off the first wave of insect pests. You should apply this type of fertilizer about every 6 to 8 weeks; however, always follow label directions very carefully as different brands have different application rates. Anytime you fertilize, you should water the product in thoroughly to avoid burning the plant. With this care, you should enjoy healthy roses with big, beautiful blooms!

