

Rosewood Garden Designs

Classic American and European Gardens
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Winter in the Garden

Here in Charlotte NC, February is the perfect time for pruning trees, many shrubs and roses. The purpose of this annual pruning is to shape and control growth, and remove any damaged limbs. Removing the tips also forces growth from the side shoots, which can be used to help keep a shrub thick and full. We prune early, before the plant has started its spring growth spurt. If you wait until too late, you'll cut off the new growth the plant has just put a lot of energy into, leaving it looking scraggly and weak. Some of the exceptions to pruning now are the late winter- early spring flowering shrubs such as azaleas and camellias. These plants should be pruned immediately after flowering. If in doubt, your local nursery will be able to help identify the plant.

In general, it is best to prune regularly, rather than wait five years and then whack it into submission. With some exceptions, such as fast growing privet and ligustrum, the rule of thumb is no more than 1/3 of a plant should be removed at any one time, as it can weaken or shock the plant, making it more susceptible to disease. If your garden's in need of serious renovation, it may take several seasons to achieve your goals, but don't despair, any start you make will have a beneficial effect and you may discover some fabulous plants under all that growth!

Roses are a vastly varied group: climbers, antiques, shrubs, hybrid teas, once-bloomers, re-bloomers, each with a specific pruning need. Many growers, as well as the American Rose Society offer clear how to's. I can only say, from my experience of tackling the 150 or so that I grow is I find it's best to go at them when I'm a little bit cranky, as you have to be ruthless! Otherwise, I'm like as not to have to do them twice, not having cut enough the first time.

There are many terrific references for pruning, books, plant societies, garden clubs and of course, the professionals. Give us a call, we'll be happy to help!

Thank you
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