

Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

Making stock and pruning roses



A perfect brandy rose blooms in spring after heavy winter pruning.

Photo Cynthia Brian

... continued from Page D16

Pruning with a hedge trimmer can be very effective to shape the larger shrub roses or big groups of one variety, but not recommended unless you have a very large number of plants. Begin by removing any dead, diseased, damaged wood, or leaves. Remove canes that are crossing or rubbing against each other, as well as weak stems or canes that are growing from the base of the bush. These canes won't produce many blooms and may crowd out healthier growth. To stimulate new growth, open the center of the bush.

Next, thin out the remaining canes, selecting the strongest and most vigorous canes. Keep only five to seven per plant and cut them back to approximately 24 inches. Ideally, make the pruning cut above an outward-facing bud and at a slight angle to encourage the new growth to emerge in the desired direction. This is not crucial and won't harm the rose if ignored, but it is best practice.

After pruning, remove any remaining attached leaves, and clean up the cut stems and debris around the base of the bush to prevent diseases and pests. Mulching and fertilizing will occur in spring.

It has been my experience that by pruning by early February, my rose garden begins its delightful display of gorgeous new blooms by late March. It only takes a bit of care and attention to love and tame our roses. As Antoine de Saint-Exupéry so exquisitely explains, we are responsible for what we've tamed.

Happy Gardening. Happy Growing. Happy February. Celebrate the Year of the Rabbit!