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January, 2020

Happy New Year!! This time of year in the San Fernando Valley is a combined Spring, Fall, and Winter. It's Winter in the North end of L.A. County where peonies and rhododendrons grow well, but not in the SFV. Spring flowers and vegetables are available now at garden centers like West Valley Nursery and the Green Thumb. Pansies, snapdragons, lettuces, peas, etc., are at their peak. Bareroot season is also happening right now. Plant roses, stone fruits, berries, and on and on.

The time to prune your roses is now. There are several types of pruning that are available. A few types are: winter prune, summer prune, finger prune, rotation prune, staggered prune, pruning for an event and, of course, shovel prune.

This is the time of year for one of the major prunings; the winter prune. Each rose has its own growth habits and should be pruned per, (1) The needs of the individual rose, prune shorter or taller (2) Your preference meaning to prune away from a walkway or to grow on a wall or trellis. Three of my favorite roses are Abraham Darby, Dr. Tommy Cairns, and Lynn Anderson. I prune each of these three roses as small climbers.

A summer prune is practiced by many exhibitors about 50 days before the Fall Rose Shows so that roses are in bloom for the occasion. In the San Fernando Valley the heat diminishes the size and quality of roses, so prune them and wait for the October shows.

Finger prune is the simplest of prunings. With roses the idea is to have roses grow away from center leaving a space for air circulation. When the new canes are an inch or so, simply snap them off.

Rotation prune means some now some later. Many of my clients want roses most if not all of the year. As an example if a client has 10 roses, 5 are pruned and then about 35 days later the other 5 roses are pruned. The caveat regulating the growth of roses is temperature; hot to cold.

Staggered pruning, as promoted by the Honolulu Rose Society, means that part of the bush is pruned and then a month or so later the rest of the bush is pruned. Again temperature governs the growth of roses.

Pruning for an event is a take-off of a summer prune. This means pruning 50 days before an event. In 2018, the Beverly Hills Rose Society pruned the International Test Garden at Rose Hills, on August 25th, for a display the weekend of October 13th. I pruned my business counselor's roses mid-October for a display in December when her relatives arrived for the holidays from Toronto, Canada. There are no roses growing out-of-doors in Toronto in December.

Shovel pruning: So many roses, so little time and space. If a rose is not productive, problematic, disease prone, etc., dig it up and put in a rose that likes where it's planted, repeats quickly, is disease resistant, maybe exhibition form and fragrant.

This is the time of year to replenish the mulch in the rose garden and the garden in general. June is another time to check the mulch. I do recommend a soils test before adding, dumping, minerals etc. in the garden. If one application is good, two may be detrimental.

Best in the New Year, Happy Gardening,
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