



## WINTERIZING ROSES

Winter in the Inland Northwest is a harsh period for roses. There are many methods to provide winter protection for roses. The whole idea of winter protection is to keep the plant uniformly cold and frozen all winter and prevent the damaging effects of alternate freezing and thawing.

### ROSE CARE AND SELECTION

Hardy, vigorous and healthy roses are much more likely to make it through severe winters than are roses weakened by disease, drought, insects, or nutrient deficiencies. Selection of plants should be based on your climate zone. It is always best to buy plants from reputable nurseries. Spring and summer care is **critical** to the hardiness of plants moving into winter, especially the recognition and mitigation of disease and pests.

### END OF SUMMER THROUGH EARLY FALL

The end of summer is the time to clean up the growing area, remove diseased leaves and stems, and consider final fertilization. Fertilizer should be low to zero for nitrogen, such as a 0-10-10. This or a similar blend will discourage the growth of new foliage. No fertilizer should be applied after August 15.

### LATE FALL

One of the best ways to protect roses for the winter is to be sure they go completely dormant. To accomplish this, stop fertilizing early enough so growth slows down. After October 1, to further encourage dormancy, stop dead-heading, cutting flowers, and remove buds (if any); allow the plant to form hips.

Fall is an excellent time to move, transplant, rearrange, or thin plants.

Be sure that roses and all plants go into winter with the soil moist around the plant. Fall rains may accomplish this.

### WINTER PREPARATION

The goal of winter care is to minimize the effects of freezing and thawing cycles on plants. Roses, however, do need to be kept cold during winter. Roses need to acclimate to cold temperatures before you insulate them.

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Winter protection should be applied after several frosts, but before the ground freezes. Watering can taper off as cold weather arrives, but never let roses dry out and become drought stressed, as this can increase the chance of winter injury. Water well into November after all leaves have dropped, then water again on warm winter days.

Some authorities advocate removing all remaining foliage in early winter. This helps to destroy insects or diseases remaining on leaves and canes. Remove any remaining debris from the bed itself. Bag all cuttings and debris to put into the garbage; do not compost.

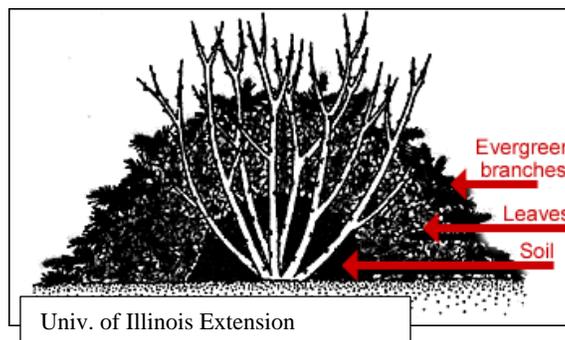
### *Pruning schools of thought*

1. One school of thought is to leave all canes uncut, as pruning may encourage late fall growth and the uncut canes provide some protection during cold weather. The majority of rose pruning will be done in the spring to remove dead and diseased canes.
2. Another school of thought is winter pruning helps mitigate wind and snow loading damage.
  - After the third hard frost or when night temperatures remain consistently below freezing (usually mid-November), trim long canes by half and shorter ones by a third.
    - Don't prune your rose too early or you will prevent the plant from hardening off.
  - Remove dead or weak shoots and any canes that show signs of diseases.
  - Leave five large, healthy canes on each plant in a basket shape.

### **SOIL MOUNDS, AND MULCH**

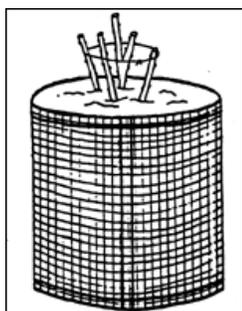
Roses grafted onto wild rose rootstock can tolerate extremely cold temperatures, but the graft is the weakest part of the plant. Just before the ground freezes, mound soil about 12 inches in and around canes, making sure the graft is completely covered. Take soil from another part of the garden -- don't use the soil under the bushes, as it would expose roots and crown to winter injury. Firm the mound gently.

After the soil mound has frozen, the mound can be covered with dried leaves, pine needles or straw to help insulate and keep the soil mound frozen. The key is to be sure that the material is well drained. Wet and cold is far more damaging than dry and cold. Your objective is to prevent alternate freezing and thawing of the soil mound. Use evergreen boughs or branches to keep mulch in place.



If your roses are particularly tender, you may want to go a step further and use a winterizing structure to completely cover the plant. You can make your own structure by surrounding each plant with a cylinder of chicken wire supported by plant stakes (collars). Then fill in the corral with pine needles, leaves, straw, or other loose and non-compacting material.

Some authors recommend burlap wraps around climbing roses or those plants that may be tall and highly likely to have heavy snow loading.



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