

Bell County Master Gardener
Tip of the Week
By Mary Lew Quesinberry
"Time to Prune Roses"

Celebrate Valentine's Day by working in the garden! February 14th is the traditional time to prune roses in Central Texas. All roses, with the exception of climbing varieties can be pruned in mid February. Climbing roses are pruned after they bloom.

Start by cleaning your pruning equipment with alcohol or a 10% chlorine solution. This will help to prevent the spread of disease. Remove dead canes and any branches that are rubbing or crossing over each other. Then stand back and assess the plant structure to see other areas that might need attention. Reshape the rose by removing only 1/3 of the plant material. Remove all pruning debris from the area when finished.

After your plant is shaped, add compost and then apply 3-4 inches of hardwood mulch. The mulch will prevent temperature extremes, conserve moisture and aid in weed control. What about fertilizer? Roses designated as EarthKind do not need fertilizers. Plant nourishment is provided from the soil microbes in the compost and the decomposing hardwood mulch.

EarthKind roses do not require fertilizers or the chemical sprays. These roses have been tested for years before they are given the EarthKind distinction. While the Knock Out varieties do not have the fragrance that some of the older varieties have, they make up for it in their almost constant blooming. EarthKind roses with fragrance are Belinda's Dream, Carefree Beauty, Perle d' Or, Spice, La Marne, Georgetown Tea, Reve d' Or, Mme Antoine Mari.

Master gardeners will have 24 varieties of roses that are designated as EarthKind at their spring plant sale March 26th. Rose varieties at the plant sale will include Knock Out, Shrub, Polyantha, Bourbon, Noisette, and China. The master gardener spring plant sale will be held in the greenhouse at the AgriLife Extension, 1605 North Main, Belton, on March 26, (7:30AM to 1PM). Herbs, vegetables, perennials and trees will also be available at the plant sale.

Have any questions about gardening in Central Texas? Contact ask.bcmqa@gmail.com

In the photo: Prune your roses in February and have beautiful blooms this spring. Select roses designated as EarthKind varieties and you can forget about a fertilizing and disease-spraying schedule.

