

Winter survival guide for roses

Many roses will not survive our cold winters without protection.

Hybrid tea roses are very popular as well as very sensitive to winter temperatures. To protect hybrid teas, some gardeners start by pruning them back to 24 to 30 inches. Remove any dead wood, any branches that cross over one another, and the suckers that come from below the ground. These gardeners will need to prune the canes again in early spring, trimming away the cane tips that suffered winter damage.

Other gardeners wait to prune in April, removing all of the winter damaged canes at that time. This is the method I prefer.

No matter if you prune in fall or not, create a mound of soil 8 to 10 inches over the crown of the plant. Use soil from a different area of the garden so that you don't disturb the roots of the rose bushes. Then tie the canes together with twine to minimize wind damage. After the ground has frozen (mid to late November), mulch the mounded plants with hay, straw, evergreen branches, or shredded leaves.



Rose cones may also be used. Follow the manufacturer's instructions. Marsh hay or straw is often used to insulate the bush inside the cone. Make sure that each cone has holes in it for air circulation. Apply the cones after a series of hard frosts around Thanksgiving. Secure each cone by placing a stone on it and mound soil around the cone's base to secure it.

Climbing roses are a little more challenging. In mid to late November, lay canes down and anchor them to the ground with wooden stakes or wire. Cover the canes with several inches of soil. A four to six inch layer of mulching can be laid over this after the ground freezes. Remove the soil and mulching in spring when the danger of severe frost is over.

Do not prune back climbing roses as you do your hybrid teas. Climbing roses produce their blooms on the wood from previous years' growth. If you prune

back all the canes, you will also significantly reduce your blossoms for next year.

Covering roses is a hassle. That's why many gardeners today look for hardy shrub roses and climbing roses. Such roses do not require winter protection; although I still protect mine with a mound of compost in the first year to make sure they survive their first Dakota winter (see photo). In spring, I spread the compost around the plant.

These hardy roses grow on their own roots; in other words, they are not grafted onto hardy wild rose rootstocks. If a *hardy "own-root"* rose dies to the ground, its roots will generate new canes and the bush will come back as good as new. If a *nonhardy grafted* rose dies to the ground (this is standard with hybrid teas), the wild rose rootstock will generate new canes and you will get a ragged wild rose plant.

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