

Red Delight Roses May Be Pruned Low

by W. D. Holley and Walter F. Larsen

Pruning Red Delight roses to 12 inches did not reduce the yield when compared to that from bushes pruned to 18 or 24 inches from the soil level. The average stem length was shortened slightly by the two lower pruning heights.

Although most greenhouse rose plants are cut back gradually, there are times when the "hair cut" type of pruning is necessary or advisable. Work by Kamp and Weinard at the University of Illinois in 1946 showed that the pruning of Better Times rose below 24 inches reduced yield without loss of stem length. The following year they pruned several varieties to 24, 30, and 36 inches. Yield was increased on Better Times at the higher pruning heights, but stem length decreased when plants were pruned at levels above 24 inches. The variety Mrs. Roosevelt responded exactly opposite to Better Times, yielding more flowers from the 24-inch pruning height and fewer from the 36-inch level. This indicates that pruning information for different varieties is not easily generalized. Each variety or group of sports may respond differently to pruning.

The reduction in height of rose bushes becomes more of a problem as we adopt better

cultural methods and taller growing varieties. Especially is this true when plants are grown on raised benches. With this height reduction problem in mind, three benches of 2-year-old Red Delight roses were divided into three equal plots per bench. The bushes were cut back to 12, 18 and 24 inches from the soil level on June 30, 1954. The pruning heights were arranged in a latin square so that no treatment received a favored position in the benches. All canes resulting from the prune were soft-pinned once before flowers were cut from the plants. Flowers were harvested from September 11, 1954 to July 6, 1955 and graded by stem length in 3-inch categories from 9 to 24 inches. Flowers with shorter than 9-inch stems and those with imperfect stems or heads were counted but not included in the number of saleable roses.

The yield of saleable blooms from bushes pruned to 12, 18 and 24 inches was almost exactly the same (Table 1). The average stem length from plants cut back to 24 inches was significantly longer than from the other two pruning heights, however this difference was very small. Only 1.1 per cent of the flowers harvested in this experiment were sufficiently faulty to be

graded as work roses. Production of saleable roses per square foot of bench area during this period of just over a year was 31.9.

Table 1. The effect of three pruning heights on yield and grade of Red Delight roses.

Pruning height	Total yield of saleable roses	Mean stem length in inches
12 inches	2093	14.26
18 inches	2101	14.24
24 inches	2101	14.39

*Your editor,
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