

Schedules for Pruning Roses

by W. D. Holley

Gradual pruning of roses has the advantage of saving all the developing flowers at any given time. There are three times of the year when gradual pruning may fit into a rose grower's schedule and not interfere with good marketing periods.

1. Early pruning starting just after the first of the year will allow the return crop for Valentine's Day and reduce the crop during Lent. Return breaks from pruning will be in the right stage for pinching for Easter and Mother's Day. This pruning schedule works well on rose varieties wanted during the summer. It also works well for plants that are scheduled for replanting in January of the following year.

2. A second schedule that has merit can be started one week following the date of the Mother's Day pinch. This allows crops for Easter and Mother's Day, and takes the plants out of production from mid-May to about June 10. One week following the Mother's Day pinch begin cutting all flowers to the knuckle.

3. A third schedule that works well for gradual pruning is that of pruning as you take the June crop. This schedule can be started with knuckle cutting on May 20. Plants pruned to this schedule can crop heavily in June, be out of production in July, and back in August.

How Gradual Pruning is Done

The knuckle cutting merely serves as markers on the canes which should be cut down each week. Hooks are easy to see if you are looking for them. Once each week, following the start of knuckle cutting, all canes with hooks on them should be pruned down. It is important that these stems be cut down before buds start break-

ing. If a stem is branched, the first cut will be made back to the branch. When the flower from the other branch is cut off, the cane should be cut down to a point just above the pruning level of the previous season. Plants that are being pruned the first time can be cut back to about 12 or 18 inches from the soil.

Several things are happening at the same time to roses undergoing gradual pruning. Flowers are being harvested, canes are being pruned down, and about four weeks after the first canes are cut down, there are new breaks to be soft pinched. There will be some others ready for soft pinching each week thereafter, even for a week or two after you cut flowers again. Soft pinching of all breaks returning from pruned canes is very important in building a plant that will stand the next year's cutting. Breaks from hard wood should always be pinched, regardless of when they arise.

A typical spring or summer schedule on gradual pruning:

- 1st week - start cutting all flowers to the knuckle.
- 2nd week - continue cutting to the knuckle, begin cutting down all canes with hooks.
- 3rd week - same as 2nd
- 4th week - same as 3rd
- 5th week - same as 4th
- 6th week - same as 5th, begin soft pinching all breaks from canes pruned down the second week.
- 7th week - cut last of flowers to knuckle, prune down canes with hooks from previous week, continue soft pinching.

- 8th week - cut down last canes, continue soft pinching.
- 9th, 10th, and 11th weeks continue soft pinching
- 12th week - begin cutting new crop of flowers, continue soft pinching for about 2 or 3 more weeks.

Complete Cut-back

A rose grower can afford to give his plants a "haircut" in late June or July, if his market is not taking all his flowers. Some varieties may be cut back in January without appreciable loss of flowers. At other times of the year, the complete cut back of rose plants is pretty costly.

Some considerations which should be kept in mind on this type of pruning are:

1. Three or four roses per plant are usually lost when compared to gradual pruning.
2. Plants are completely out of production for 75 to 80 days. This allows times for soft pinching all returning breaks, which should be done.
3. Prune 85 to 90 days before Easter, if you want to get an Easter pinch on the plants.
4. Do not prune after July 15, if it can be avoided. Plants pruned too late in the summer do not recover properly for the following winter. Stem length and yield will be reduced by late pruning.

*your editor,
W.D. Holley*

COLORADO STATE FLOWER GROWERS ASSOCIATION
OFFICE OF EDITOR
W. D. HOLLEY
 Colorado State University
 Fort Collins, Colorado

FIRST CLASS

Geo. Beach