

PRUNING HYBRID-TEA ROSES

The best time to prune roses is in the spring before new growth appears and after danger of killing frost. Be sure to remove dead stubs. Otherwise, canker fungi may invade stubs and progress into healthy tissue during the summer. Use sharp shears and make cuts at a 45-degree angle about a quarter-inch above healthy buds. How much to prune after dead wood removal depends on the type of rose. For shrub roses, pruning usually consists of removing dead wood or light pruning for shaping. This article focuses on hybrid tea roses which require much more extensive pruning. With hybrid teas, there are three pruning styles, each with a specific purpose. **Heavy or severe pruning** is done on well-established, vigorous plants to produce large, showy flowers. Prune back to three to four healthy canes with three to six eyes per cane. Canes normally will be 6 to 12 inches long.

Moderate pruning is done on well-established, healthy plants and is designed to increase the number of flowers produced rather than increase flower size. Leave five to six healthy canes with at least seven buds per cane. Prune stems to 12 to 18 inches long.

Light pruning rejuvenates plants after years of neglect or may be performed on newly established plants. Leave five to seven canes of about 18 inches or more in length. This helps maximize leaf area for energy production and rejuvenates plants. If your plants suffered a significant amount of winter damage, they may need to be cut back more severely than even the heavy-pruning style. This will result in a few large flowers but in this case is your only option.

Wild Garlic, Wild Onion and Star-of-Bethlehem

Wild garlic (*Allium vineale*) and wild onion (*Allium canadense*) are two closely related plants that can become weed problems in home lawns and landscapes. Though wild garlic and wild onion look much alike, each has an odor that is characterized by its name – wild garlic smells like garlic and wild onion smells like onion. These plants are perennials that can also reproduce by seeds and aerial bulbils. Bulbils form at the top of the stem and are oval and smooth. Wild garlic also reproduces by underground bulb offsets, but wild onion does not. Both species produce a clump of plants that is unsightly in a lawn. Control recommendations are the same though we now have a couple of new additions to our arsenal. Traditionally we have used 2,4-D or 2,4-D + MCPP + Dicamba (i.e., Trimec, Weed-Out, Weed-B-Gon). These products should be sprayed during March on a day that is at least 50 degrees. Newer products are Weed Free Zone and Speed Zone. Both are combination products that contain a formulation of Trimec plus carfentrazone. These will give a quicker response at cooler temperatures near 50 degrees. A spreader-sticker added to the spray should help any of these products be more effective. At times, the spreader-sticker is already mixed into the weed killer; no additional amount is needed. These herbicides are also effective on dandelions. Unfortunately, we have not had a good chemical control for Star-of-Bethlehem. The best products we had were Coolpower (31.3% control) and Turflon Ester (23.8% control). Coolpower is a commercial only product, but Turflon Ester is available to both commercial and homeowner users. But research out of Virginia Tech has improved our outlook. Scientists there did a study in which they gained 96% control of Star-of-Bethlehem one month after treatment by using Quicksilver, a formulation of carfentrazone at the rate of 4 fl. oz/A. Quicksilver is a commercial only product, and therefore is not available to homeowners. However, both Speed Zone and Weed Free Zone contain carfentrazone and would certainly be worth a try if you have this troublesome plant.

Controlling Weeds in Home Garden Asparagus Beds

The best time to control weeds in asparagus is early spring before the asparagus emerges. A light tilling (or hoeing) that is shallow enough to avoid the crowns will eliminate existing weeds. Many gardeners like to mix in organic matter during the same operation. Herbicides can be used before asparagus emerges. Glyphosate (Roundup, Killzall) will kill weeds that are actively growing, and the preemergence herbicide trifluralin can be used to kill weed seeds as they germinate. Trifluralin is found in several products, but not all of them list

asparagus on the label. Those that do have asparagus on the label include Miracle-Gro Weed Preventer Granules and Monterey Vegetable and Ornamental Weeder. Mulch can also be used to keep weeds from invading. No herbicides can be used during harvest. The end of harvest presents another opportunity. Remove all fern and spears and apply Roundup to control virtually all of the weeds present. Past the harvest season and after regrowth of the asparagus, options are limited. Products that contain sethoxydim can be applied to asparagus to kill grassy weeds. Sethoxydim has no effect on broadleaves including asparagus. Two sethoxydim products available to homeowners and labeled for asparagus are Monterey Grass Getter and Hi-Yield Grass Killer. With broadleaf weeds the only option is to pull them and look forward to next year.

Remove Fern and Fertilize Asparagus

If you haven't removed last year's growth from asparagus plants, now is the time. Asparagus comes up around the first of April, give or take a week depending on the weather and which part of the state you live in. Also, asparagus benefits from a fertilizer application early spring. Fertilize according to a soil test or add 1 to 2 pounds of a 10-20-10 fertilizer per 20 feet of row before growth starts. If a soil test shows that only nitrogen is needed, apply 1 pound of a 20-0-0 product per 20 feet of row. Incorporate lightly with a tiller or rake in fertilizer before spears emerge. Fertilize again at the same rate after the last harvest.

Frost Proof Vegetable Plants

Certain vegetables can withstand cold spring temperatures as long as they have been toughened up by gradually exposing them to sunlight and outdoor temperatures. This "hardening off" process usually takes about a week. Reducing watering and temperature is the key to toughening up transplants. If possible, move transplants outside for a portion of each day. Start by placing them in a shady, protected location and gradually move them into a more exposed, sunny location as the week progresses. Hardened off cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower and onions can withstand temperatures near 20 F without being killed. Lettuce plants are not quite as tough but will be okay if exposed to temperatures in the mid 20s. Don't hesitate to put these plants out now if extreme cold is not forecast.