

I am convinced the more I age, the more forgetful I become. Today, I begin by sharing a joke with you—one that fits me to a T. Furthermore, the joke allows me to introduce, somewhat lightheartedly, today's topic. After all, it is April Fool's Day, which compels me to begin with a little humor!

*Two older couples were enjoying an evening meal together. Following the meal, the wives adjourned to the living room while the two husbands (Ed and Fred) remained seated, still conversing at the dinner table. Ed said to Fred, "You know Fred, the other evening, the wife and I went to this delightful new restaurant. Their service was outstanding, the food delicious, and the prices were extremely reasonable!"*

*Somewhat excited, Fred replied, "What's the name?"*

*Ed, hesitating for a brief period while rubbing his chin and looking deeply bewildered, countered, "Fred, ah, ah, what is the name of that red flower you and your wife grow in your yard every summer?"*

*"Oh, you mean geraniums," said Fred.*

*"No, no, no," blurted Ed, "It's that red flower that grows on a shrub and has thorns?"*

*"Oh", says Fred, "You mean a rose?"*

*"Yes, that's it", cried Ed! Immediately Ed turned in his chair, leaned back, while looking over his shoulder toward the living room, shouted to his wife, "**Rose**, what was the name of that restaurant we went to the other evening?"*

You guessed it. Today it is all about the rose and particularly the knock out rose. For the past two weeks, I have received numerous calls from homeowners wanting to know how and when to prune their roses. Until now, I have encouraged homeowners to wait patiently. Now is the time!

Knockout roses have become very popular in the past few years. Their popularity is due to their low maintenance, insect pest and disease resistance and beautiful flowers blooming all summer.



Although considered nearly maintenance free, knockout roses do require some pruning to keep them in bounds. Knockouts are vigorous growers. The average growth in one season is generally three to four feet. Each spring I recommend cutting the canes back to approximately twelve inches. If the canes display winterkill (blackened and brittle), cut them back to

where living green tissue is visible.



Currently, knockout buds should be highly visible alongside the living canes. By now, the buds may have reached a half-inch or more in length. Select a bud pointing in an outward direction and with a bypass pruning shears, cut slightly above the bud creating an angular cut. This pattern of pruning prevents the plant from growing into itself. Now is also the time to remove any broken canes or

canes rubbing against one another. Since knockout roses have extremely sharp thorns, I strongly encourage you to wear a good pair of gardening gloves.

One of the outstanding characteristics of knockout roses is they bloom continuously throughout the growing season. To keep them looking tidy, deadheading faded flowers may be necessary. Unlike deadheading herbaceous flowers, avoid pinching out the flowers with your fingers or you will surely “get the point.” Again, use pruning shears.



As I began, the more I age, the more forgetful I become. For example, all too often, when I am visiting with someone and my mind goes blank, I generally say, “I’ve been told the first thing to go is your mind, and I can’t remember the second!” They chuckle and we move on. Just another example of my forgetfulness—which fits me to a T. Here’s wishing you a Happy April Fool’s Day!