

IN THE DIRT

Pruning and winter protection of grandiflora & floribunda roses

Protection should now be in place; with most roses, wait until mid to late April to prune

Hybrid tea, grandiflora, floribunda and some cultivars of miniature roses need winter protection. These plants may need pruning to allow them to fit beneath a winter protection method, such as a rose cone, and to remove very tall laterals that may be damaged by winter winds. The majority of pruning should be done in April just before or as new growth begins.

Most roses are protected by covering them. The key is to wait until the plant is hardened off and temperatures are cold. Do not put rose protection in place until soil has frozen or night temperatures are consistently dropping into the 20s at night. Mound 8 inches of soil around the base of roses after soil temperatures have cooled in late fall to protect the plant crown. Use a well-drained soil for this rather than one high in clay. After mounding, moisten the soil mound. After the soil is frozen, apply coarse mulch. A good mulching method is to encircle the rose with a chicken wire cage staked to hold it in place, then fill the cage with coarse leaves. For best growth, wait until April to prune winter killed wood.

Garden Guide: Things to do this month

- ✓ Use sand instead of salt for icy spots on the sidewalk.
- ✓ Feed the birds regularly and see that they have water. Birds like suet, fruit, nuts and bread crumbs as well as bird seed.
- ✓ Check young trees and shrubs for rodent or rabbit damage. Prevent injury with fencing or protective collars.
- ✓ Review your vegetable garden plans. Perhaps a smaller garden with fewer weeds and insects will give you more produce.
- ✓ Avoid heavy traffic on the frozen, dormant lawn. The crown of the plant may be severely damaged or killed.
- ✓ Brush snow from evergreens as soon as possible after a storm. Use a broom in an upward, sweeping motion. Serious damage may be caused by heavy snow or ice accumulating on the branches.
- ✓ Analyze last year's planting, fertilizing and spraying records. Make notes to reorder successful varieties as well as those you wish to try again.
- ✓ Check stored fruits and vegetables such as potatoes and apples for bad spots which may lead to decay. Remove and use those which show signs of spoiling. Separate others into slotted trays or bins to increase air circulation and reduce decay possibilities.
- ✓ To prolong bloom, protect poinsettias from drafts and keep them moderately moist.
- ✓ Turn and prune house plants regularly to keep them shapely. Pinch back new growth to promote bushy plants.
- ✓ Check all house plants closely for insect infestations. Quarantine gift plants until you determine they are not harboring any pests.
- ✓ House plants with large leaves and smooth foliage, such as philodendrons, dracaena and rubber plant benefit if their leaves are washed at intervals to remove dust and grime, helping keep the leaf pores open.
- ✓ When reviewing your garden catalogs for new vegetable varieties to try, an important consideration is improved insect and/or disease resistance. Watch also for drought-tolerant types.

- ✓ House plants and holiday gift plants should not be placed on top of the television. This location is too warm and in most homes too far from windows to provide adequate light.
- ✓ If you have some time this winter, paint the handles of garden tools red or orange. This will preserve the wood and make the tools easier to locate next summer when you lay them down in the garden or on the lawn.
- ✓ Move garden ornaments such as urns or jars into the garage or basement to prevent damage during the cold winter season. If containers are too large to move, cover them to prevent water collecting in them or turn them upside down during the winter so water will not collect and freeze in them causing breakage.
- ✓ During the winter most houses are too dry for house plants. Humidity may be increased by placing plants on trays lined with pebbles and filled with water to within one half inch of the base of the pot.

Source: <https://newsroom.unl.edu/announce/lancasterextension/8657/51920>

For The Birds!

When it comes down to the basics, songbirds are no different than any other animal. They need food, water and shelter to live. The better the provision of these elements, the more time they stay in a certain area such as your acreage.



Food – A wide variety of bird food choices are available, some specific to certain species such as niger for finches and suet for woodpeckers and others such as black oil sunflower and safflower more general in nature. In Nebraska, most bird feeding aficionados use sunflower seed cautiously as it tends to draw in blackbirds and grackles, which dominate feeding stations and drive off desirable species. The key to feeding in winter is to keep feeders full so that birds can identify them as a consistent source of food when natural sources are covered with ice and snow or have been depleted.

Water – Just as food can be limiting for wild birds, so can water...in fact, commonly more so. Unfrozen water sources are scarce in a Nebraska winter. Providing a clean, reliable watering station will greatly increase the odds of attracting birds in winter. Now, there's clean and there's clean; bird baths don't need to meet human drinking standards. After all, they drink out of mud holes in much of the year. A good scrubbing with a stiff brush every other day and a fresh refill will suffice.



Shelter – A small spot to get out of the wind and away from predators is crucial to the survival of songbirds in winter. In a natural setting, plum thickets and native evergreen stands serve this function quite well. Most acreages are well equipped with good shelter features, especially ones with windbreaks and habitat plantings. If none are present, spending a little time with pen and paper now will pay off in the long run, both in terms of redirection of snow load as well as shelter provision. In the meantime, simply placing a Christmas tree near the feeder will provide a temporary,

but important refuge.

Source: <https://acreagenebraska.org/2019/01/01/for-the-birds/>