

Deadheading and Disbudding

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Deadheading and **disbudding** are terms that sound alike, but are very different. **Deadheading** is an integral part of regular grooming and maintenance, while **disbudding** is an optional choice to create a desired result.

Deadheading:

To “**deadhead**” refers to removing dead or spent blossoms. This practice promotes repeat blooming by directing the plant’s energy into flower production instead of reproduction (seed).

Deadheading also removes hiding places for insects, discourages disease, improves air circulation and makes way for more sun to reach more deeply into the plant. Regular deadheading throughout the growing season will stimulate faster rebloom, often grow stronger stems, and definitely keep your roses looking more attractive.

To **deadhead**, cut at an angle below the spent blossom, approximately 1” above an outward facing five-leaflet leaf and swollen bud eye (where the next flower stem will grow) and where the stem is about pencil size or larger for hybrid teas and smaller for smaller flowers. Often the leaf where you have made the cut will turn yellow and fall off – this is normal.

When you are removing a spray, cluster, or cluster of blooms, cut below the entire mass. During the intensely hot summer months in the desert, it is imperative that you leave as much foliage on the bush as possible to avoid sunburn of the canes, and some advocate “finger pruning” or removing only the spent flower bloom and no more for this reason. However, during the spring and fall growing season your cuts can be deeper down the stems. While **deadheading** you can adjust the height of various canes by how far down you cut them. You do not necessarily have to cut to the first five leaflet leaf; it can be the second, third etc. five leaflet leaf, depending upon desired shape and balance.

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Disbudding:

The practice of **disbudding** applied to roses can produce some impressive results in the size and quality of the bloom. This is how you get those big lovely long-stemmed roses. When **disbudding** for one bloom to a stem roses, such as hybrid teas, you remove the side buds that develop at the leaf axels below the main bloom. This is done by rubbing out the tiny buds from the angle created between the leaf and stem. I find my thumb works best for getting right in there. The earlier you do this in the development of the side buds the better, for you will leave no less of a **disbudding** scar or black stub. How many buds do I remove? Enough that you will have the desired stem length with no side buds. In a rose show, a single bloom on a stem will be disqualified if it has side buds, with the exception of old garden roses and shrub roses. When **disbudding** roses that bloom in clusters like the floribundas, it is a little different process. You have to look at the stem and see how many buds there are. If there is a central bud and only one or two side buds, remove the side buds and go for a one bloom stem. When presented with many buds and a central bud, remove the central bud and make this stem into a spray (or cluster) of blooms. The central bud would normally bloom first and be faded when the rest of the buds open. A spray, for show purposes, must contain two or more blossoms and three or more blossoms are best. If trying for a spray for show be sure that the multiple buds have at least three buds of about the same size so they will be open at the same time to give the desired blossom count.

Disbudding of minis and minifloras follows the directions for **disbudding** hybrid teas for one bloom to a stem. If you are going for a spray of blossoms, be it on hybrid tea, grandiflora, floribunda, mini or miniflora, follow the directions for cluster blooming roses. Polyantha and small flowered cluster blooming roses are usually not **disbudded**. **Disbudding** old garden roses varies depending on the type of rose and your preference.