

# Cozy rosies this winter

Here we go again... so say the weather experts.

Roses, as a rule, are cold-hardy to just about any type of winter that the Lower Mainland's mild West Coast climate can dish up. Of course, there are always exceptions caused by extreme temperature fluctuations. If the cold our experts are predicting comes late in winter and with some snow cover, the roses will be at their peak dormancy, and will endure much better than during a quick, early freeze like we experienced in November 2010.

The types of roses I have lost in cold or "snap" freeze winters have been container roses, hybrid teas, and sometimes floribundas. I can't recall losing an established shrub, climber or old garden rose in my 30+ years of growing roses in this area. I have done some severe pruning after harsh winters but most roses, other than our beloved hybrid teas, they tend to bounce back beautifully.

With that in mind, here is some key points to get your roses ready for this upcoming winter:

**Keep it simple.** Roses, for the most part, will survive winter despite what you do or do not do to it.

**When planting new roses, always plant deeper!** Plant your own-root or grafted rose, about 1-2 inches below the top part of the root-ball. Never plant with the crown of the rose sticking above soil levels.

**Do not strip the foliage.** Roses should be allowed to experience a "normal" winter dormancy. Stripping of foliage, in our mild West Coast climate, causes roses to break dormancy rather than enjoying winter's rest.

**Clean up** any foliage that has naturally fallen from the bush in fall.

**Do not hard prune in fall.** Prune only the tops of roses off in fall, as a rose that is left with most of its growth will have far more energy to re-grow in spring, and will handle cold temperatures much better than a rose that is hard pruned.

**Tie climbers.** If your climbers have long shoots, tie them in for winter so they do not whip around during winter storms.

**Stake your trees.** It is critical that a tree rose be well staked as they are far more sensitive to winter injury than shrubs. A piece of foam pipe insulation covering the main stem works wonders in winter.

If the winter is very very cold for a long period of time you risk losing hybrid teas that are grafted as trees. If they are predicting temperatures below -10°C it would be a good idea to wrap the top of the tree as well. Shrub style roses grafted as trees are very winter hardy and would not need this same fussy protection... I just wish I could convince more of you to buy shrub roses grafted as trees!

**Hill up the bases.** If your roses are planted high, or if you have a garden that is full of hybrid tea roses, they will benefit from "hilling" up the base of the rose with 12 inches of extra mulch.

**Don't fuss.** If you are in a cold, wind-swept area, taking some precautions during a winter that is well below our normal temperatures is a great idea. But don't fuss too much. If winter maintenance isn't your game, choose appropriate roses for your hardiness zone! There are many amazing options!