

Is It Spring Yet?

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Bruner's Botanical Bytes

By Gregory Bruner

Can spring be far around the corner? Daffodils are blooming; plants are beginning to wake up from their winter slumber. January was warmer than normal, and February is off to a warm start too. Mother Nature may seem to be running ahead of schedule, but that does not mean winter is over yet.

Pruning continues to be on the top of my to-do list. It's a wonderful time to trim and shape one of my favorite flowering shrubs—roses, including hybrid-T's, grandifloras, floribundas, and shrub roses. A little care now will pay dividends during the summer months. Rose leaf buds may begin to swell with the warmer days. We can see where all of the active growth is going to be this coming spring.

The correct pruning of your roses ensures healthy, vigorous plants with larger flowers and stronger stems. When crossing and extra branches are removed from the interior of the plant, it improves air circulation and reduces disease problems. Always prune with an eye for plant shape, and check carefully where the branch ends before pruning. Branches are very easy to remove but not easily reattached if a cut is made in error.

For a touch of spring, cut branches from forsythia, redbuds, or pussy willows to force blooms indoors. Once the flower buds start to swell, cut the branches and submerge them in a tub of cold water for at least 3-4 hours. Then submerge 12" of the stems in a bucket of cold water and store the bucket in a place no warmer than 60 degrees for 1 week. After this time has elapsed, place the stems in a vase and watch the buds open over the next few days.

February is upon us. Soon the days and nights will truly begin to warm up, but until then continue cleaning, pruning, and planning. Before we know it, our thoughts of birds, butterflies, and flowering paradises will be reality once again.