

March 1 - March came in like a frozen lion all cloudy, damp, windy, and cold. With temperatures forecast to be in the upper 20's later in the week, nothing to do but have a "Blue Rose" (my current favorite adult beverage) and catch up on my streaming.

March 6 - Let the start-up begin! I will make my final cuts today. Even though I have 250 roses, 90% of the pruning was done in December. So, I will be able to finish the pruning by the end of the day.

March 7 - Now comes the part I hate, removing the winter protection mulch and spreading it out. This will take several days due to my knee and hip surgeries. 20 years ago, I could do this all in one day, but not now. I will use a child-size hoe and a few hand tools while sitting on one of the collapse able high stools that Wendy used to sell. I just ordered a "Scoot-N' Do" from AM Leonard so I don't have to get up and down as much. I will let you know how it performs in next month's Journal entries. I am spreading the mulch now because the forecast is for temperatures to be in the 60's going into the fourth week of March so there is no danger of cane or bud union cold damage like I had every year in Atlanta with their super-late severe freezes.

March 10 - Spreading the mulch is done, time to apply my start-up spray including the usual suspects, **Banner Maxx** (Bumper), **Daconil Ultrex**, **Stature**, and **Hexygon** (miticide and ovicide) to clean up any old mite eggs.

March 11 - The weather is delightful. So, it's time to use my **Ryobi** battery-powered edger. It works great, but the battery-life stinks! While I am using one battery, the other "2" are busy getting charged. Yes, I have 3 batteries. More profit for Ryobi!

March 12 - Weather is still nice so I am tending to my **Dramm** irrigation system. Once the weather is really nice in April, there often is no time to get it going. I always have to fish around for the emitters under some mulch or put new ones on. In my Dramm system, the emitters are called "pin perfect emitters" and come in many colors that vary the width of the circle of water.

March 15 - As always, the first warm spell in March gets a lot of the buds at the top of the bush growing. After a week or two, it is obvious to tell the difference between good strong growth and growth that will not yield anything good down the road. Time to cut below this top growth to a more promising bud. Don't worry, you might even be doing this in April on some of your roses. And quite often you may have more than one cane start. Just pluck off some of the buds leaving the best one to continue growing.



Summer Song

March 17 - Just got my **Summer Song** David Austin English Rose today. Wendy found this European David Austin rose for me and David Austin is not planning to sell it in the U.S. It is teeny-tiny and will likely spend the rest of this year in a pot either in the greenhouse or out in the sun when conditions warrant. Wendy says I am the only in the U.S. with this rose, which I am skeptical of. It is a deep orange-red similar to Pat Austin with a strong fragrance. It should be fun to see the first blooms.

March 22 - I have been walking through the garden the last few days and doing a little extra pruning at the top of the canes of the hybrid teas and grandifloras. This is where the top buds are not growing or growing poorly, but a few inches lower down on the cane is a robustly growing bud. I prune the poor-growing cane back to just above that robustly growing bud which, hopefully produces a fine bloom in 55 - 60 days or so.

This is also a good time to start "thumb-pruning" out the extra guard buds at any point on the canes. This allows all the energy to go to the one remaining strongest bud, thus creating a better growing cane with better long-stemmed beautiful blooms on hybrid teas and grandifloras. Of course, no thumb-pruning is needed if your goal is to have the most blooms possible on a bush.

March 23 - I don't do much "thumb-pruning" on floribundas as my goal with them is to get as many blooms as possible on the bush, even if I plan on entering floribunda sprays in rose shows. But there is nothing wrong with thumb-pruning floribundas if you choose to do so.

Disbudding floribunda sprays is much more important, especially with varieties like **Arctic Blue**, that are so top-heavy with mega-sprays that cane breakage is quite likely! For this rose and others like it, I remove many of the tiny-little sprays within the spray to make the spray much fuller by allowing the remaining larger blooms room to develop. Addition by subtraction at its finest.

March 25 - Lots of cloudy, damp weather the past few days with a lot of 50s temperature-wise. Could be a recipe for downy mildew. Already seeing a bit of it on new potted roses from various mail-order sources. Time for another spray of **Stature** and I think I will add **Systec (Cleary's 3336)** instead of **Banner Maxx** as I like to occasionally rotate something else into my spray schedule this time of year to give the fungus spores something different to deal with.

Way back in the good-old days I rotated **Triforine** (Funginex) into my spray schedule to eliminate any resistance to **Banner Maxx**, especially if I was doing my 3-week blackspot elimination program in a client's garden. I also used **Cleary's 3336** in that rotation along with **Daconil Ultrex** and **Mancozeb** (flowable, not the terrible chalky powder).

March 28 - Lots of good-looking canes are starting to grow. We are still doing a lot of thumb-pruning. Seems they pop out of thin air every day. But it is worth it to get better bushes. Soon it will be "disbudding time" when extra flower buds are rubbed off with my first finger. They actually do come out of thin air every day.