

Claude Graves on Pruning Roses

From a talk on pruning Mr. Graves to the Collin County Rose Society in 2009

Most winter damage to rose bushes is due to dissection, Claude Graves of Richardson, Texas, told a gathering of Collin County rose growers recently.

Mr. Graves is a well-known rosarian whose old garden climbers and hybrid teas is one of the most popular stops on Dallas-area garden tours.

“Eight-five percent of winter damage is due to dehydration. It’s very important to keep rose watered in the winter,” he said.

Black spot is still a problem right now, he said. Mr. Graves advised rosarians to strip off the old foliage during pruning and during the winter.

He described pruning experiments that the Royal National Rose Society of England has conducted.

First, they used a gasoline-power hedge clipper and noted the difference. They found that roses did very well, he told the Collin County Rose Society members recently.

“They studied not pruning at all. The roses did great with no pruning,” he said.

“The accepted ARS pruning method has been adopted because we plant too close,” he said. This type of pruning started by exhibition growers, he said. He said that most people plant their roses on 36-inch centers. Rosarians should plant roses on five-foot to six-foot centers, he said.

The traditional method is to prune for size and remove unwanted growth, he told the group. “The English studied not pruning dead wood, and they are getting very good results,” he said

Mr. Graves said he has tried cutting back heavily every two to three years. “They ‘sulk’ like crazy the first year. The next spring they grow. By the third year, they are too big again.

Planning new beds, plant on 60-inch centers. It will cut down on labor, he said. — **Jay Goode**