

THE FOUNDATION

The everyday habits that make the biggest difference.



SUNLIGHT

6+ hours of direct sun is ideal. Morning sun is especially helpful because foliage dries sooner, reducing disease pressure.



WATER

Aim for about 1 inch of water per week during the growing season, adjusting for heat and soil. Water deeply at the base.



SOIL

Roses prefer fertile, well-drained soil. A pH around 6.0-7.0 is generally preferred.



MULCH

Apply 2-3 inches of mulch to conserve moisture and suppress weeds. Keep mulch about 6 inches away from the crown.

FEED + PRUNE + BLOOM

A simple rhythm for repeat-blooming roses.



FEED

For many repeat-flowering roses, a typical Illinois schedule is spring, again after the spring bloom, and a final feeding in mid-July. Stop fertilizing after August 15. Always follow the product label and adjust for rose type.



PRUNE

Do most pruning in early spring. Remove dead, damaged, diseased, weak, or crossing canes. Make clean cuts about 1/4 inch above an outward-facing bud.



DEADHEAD

Remove spent blooms on repeat-blooming roses to encourage more flowers and reduce botrytis risk. Stop deadheading after October 1 so plants can harden off.

WATCH FOR THESE COMMON PROBLEMS



BLACK SPOT

Black spots usually begin on lower leaves; infected leaves yellow and drop. Improve airflow, remove infected debris, and avoid wetting foliage when watering.



POWDERY MILDEW

White powdery growth often affects young leaves and the upper plant. Improve airflow and sanitation; treat only with a product labeled for roses if needed.



YELLOWING / CHLOROSIS

Interveneal yellowing can reflect nutrient availability or high pH, but watering, roots, disease, and stress can look similar. Diagnose before treating.



CLIMBING ROSE NOTE

Train the main canes more horizontally to encourage bloom-producing side shoots. Repeat-blooming climbers are typically pruned in early spring; once-blooming ramblers are pruned after flowering. Remove winter-damaged wood first and avoid severe pruning on young climbers.



Use this as a practical starting point; weather, rose class, and cultivar can shift timing.



MARCH - APRIL

Wake up + prune

- Remove winter protection gradually once the ground thaws and severe cold has passed.
- Prune winter-killed, dead, damaged, diseased, weak, and crossing canes.
- Clean up old leaves and debris that may harbor disease.
- Forsythia bloom is a useful cue for spring pruning.



AUGUST - SEPTEMBER

Slow the season down

- Do not fertilize after August 15 so tender new growth is not pushed late in the season.
- Keep watering during dry spells; stressed roses enter winter weaker.
- Continue sanitation and remove diseased foliage.
- Deadhead through September if desired, then stop after October 1.



MAY

Feed + mulch

- Begin the season's feeding program once active growth is underway; follow the fertilizer label.
- Refresh mulch to 2-3 inches, keeping it away from the crown.
- Water deeply and consistently; base watering helps keep foliage dry.
- Start watching for aphids, caterpillars, black spot, and mildew.



OCTOBER - NOVEMBER

Clean up + protect

- After a killing frost, remove fallen leaves and flower debris.
- Keep fall pruning minimal; save major pruning for spring.
- Tender roses may need winter protection after hard frost; hardy shrub roses often need less.
- Wait until plants are dormant before hilling or protecting the crown.



JUNE

Bloom + repeat

- Deadhead repeat-blooming roses as flowers fade.
- For many repeat bloomers, feed again around the end of the spring bloom period.
- Keep foliage dry when watering and maintain good air circulation.
- Remove diseased leaves and spent flowers promptly.



WINTER

Rest + plan

- Leave dormant plants undisturbed.
- Watch for rabbit, vole, or other animal damage.
- Review disease issues from the past season and plan care changes.
- Choose new roses with your local hardiness zone in mind.



JULY

Support the second flush

- Repeat-blooming roses may receive a final feeding around mid-July.
- Continue deep watering during hot weather; frequency depends on soil and heat.
- Deadhead and lightly shape repeat bloomers as needed.
- Identify pests before treating; use the least disruptive control that works.

QUICK REFERENCE



WATER

about 1 inch/week total in the growing season; adjust for heat and soil



MULCH

2-3 inches deep; keep about 6 inches away from the crown



SOIL PH

about 6.0-7.0 is generally preferred



PRUNING

about 1/4 inch above an outward-facing bud; clean, sharp tools

SOURCES + NOTE



Care recommendations are based on University of Illinois Extension rose guidance and Iowa State University Extension's seasonal rose-care guidance. Always follow product labels and adjust for your rose type, cultivar, site, and current weather conditions.

extension.illinois.edu/roses | yardandgarden.extension.iastate.edu/how-to/rose-care-season

