

This article appeared in the Denver Post, May 9th, 2012

<http://www.denverpost.com/2012/05/09/a-rose-by-any-other-name-call-it-an-herb/>

A Rose by any other name? Call it an herb

By Betty Cahill

With apologies to Gertrude Stein, this year “A rose is a rose is an herb.” The International Herb Association designated the rose as the 2012 herb of the year. Herbs are defined as plants that are useful for their fragrance, flavoring or food, medicinal properties and coloring materials (dyes). We know that other herbs like mint, thyme, rosemary and chives are natural additions and culinary must haves to any garden, but the “queen of flowers,” the rose, takes top billing for the aesthetic possibilities in flower form, fragrance, color, taste and beauty. Rose herbal delights are many - crystallized petals are visual candy, delicious and inviting on a birthday cake, rose flavored honey and rose syrup served over crepes or pound cake will leave your friends and family with gourmet envy. And you’ll just smile, knowing that these easy recipe ingredients took seconds to gather and minutes to prepare. The list gets longer with rose petal tea, rose hip sauce, rose vinegars, and easy, yet elegant looking rose petal ice cubes!

The provenance of using roses as herbs dates back to the 16th century Ottoman Empire where rose petals were distilled and made into rose oil, known as otto or attar, (otto is derived from the Arabic *attar*, meaning 'essence'.) There is no other herbal essential oil quite like rose oil, derived from *Rosa damascena* and *Rosa centifolia* for use as fragrance in perfumes, lotions, and other cosmetics. Today, Bulgaria, Turkey, Morocco and France command the majority of rose oil production. It takes 180 pounds of damask rose petals to produce an ounce of attar, and that small amount sells for about \$500.00. No wonder Cleopatra and ancient Romans had such high regard for the rose, almost bordering on obsession, using rose water in fountains, public baths and petals for stuffing pillows!

Roses speak from the heart, and this is evidenced all around us. We decorate with roses for weddings, anniversaries, parades and final resting places, symbolizing love, devotion, celebrations and life. Roses long, rich history spans from thirty five million year old rose fossil beds found in Colorado at Florissant National Park, <https://www.nps.gov/flfo/index.htm> to our first President who grew roses and named one after his mother, which is still grown today, ‘*Mary Washington*.’ Roses grow in all fifty states and were designated America’s national flower by Congress in 1986.

Selections -

Because there are so many varieties of roses to choose from, spend time thinking about what you’re looking for and where it will be planted. Prepare your planting site well. Read the plant tags for mature size and give them room to grow; crowding roses is never a good idea. Planting roses properly will ensure years of enjoyment. Joan Franson, a longtime Denver Master Consulting Rosarian says “roses grow well if planted in the right place, so don’t blame the rose if it fails because it wasn’t planted where it should have been.” You’ll find roses that do well in shrub borders, flower beds, hedges, as specimens, containers and climbers for fences, arbors and walls. They blend well in any style of garden, and a few varieties are somewhat shade tolerant. Read more planting and care information at <http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/garden/07404.html>

Garden centers and mail order companies sell roses in two distinct ways - grafted or own-root. A grafted rose has a named variety on top, grafted or budded to a different, vigorous understock. Grafted roses can be less

hardy and require special planting care and winter protection. The graft, or knob (very noticeable on the plant), must be planted 3-4 inches below the soil for winter protection. And it's a good idea to mulch grafted roses with chopped leaves or extra soil in late fall. More and more retailers are selling own-root roses, which have their own named varietal rose as their roots. Own-root roses tend to be hardier, and need less (if any) special winter protection.

There are three main groups of roses - Species, Old Garden Roses, and Modern Roses. Knowing the differences will simplify your shopping experience. Species roses, also called "wild roses," usually have a single row of 4 to 8 petals, ranging in plant size from two to twenty feet. These tough, hardy, drought tolerant roses are mostly spring bloomers and at the end of the season form colorful seed pods, called hips. Colorado has four native species roses - *Rosa acicularis*, *Rosa arkansana*, *Rosa stellata* and *Rosa woodsii*. According to Joan Franson, '*Rosa foetida bicolor*,' also known as '*Austrian Copper*,' has ties to The University of Denver. A horticulturist from the school back in the 1930s propagated and sold Austrian Copper as the "*DU Rose*" because the rose matched the school colors and proceeds from the rose went to the school's football program.

Old Garden Roses, also called antique, heirloom, or "Grandma's roses" remain popular today for their easy care, wonderful fragrance, beautiful blooms and stunning display of fall rose hips. OGRs range in size from giant climbers to sprawling ground covers or shrubs that make excellent container plants. Consider '*Rose de Rescht*,' a bushy, 3-foot upright, densely leaved shrub known for her powerful fragrance. She blooms a gorgeous deep fuchsia pink in flushes (intermittently) through the summer and you'll notice that the blooms are very close to the foliage, almost peony-like. '*Madame Hardy*' has beautiful white cupped fragrant blooms, with a cute, button-eye green center. She's a spring blooming, medium sized shrub, 4' x 5', very disease resistant, and hardy to zone 4. Don't fret over once blooming roses, many shrubs like lilac and forsythia bloom only once and we still enjoy them all season long.

For a closer look at Old Garden Roses, check out the collection at Fairmount Cemetery, which were brought to the Denver area by early settlers (canes were poked into potatoes for safe keeping and moisture on their trek out west). It was customary to plant roses and other long blooming perennials on gravesites. Take a tour of the roses at Fairmount Cemetery, for more information – <http://fairmount-cemetery.com/project/rose-garden/>

Modern Roses, progenies to Species and Old Garden Roses, include shrub, hybrid tea, miniature, floribunda, and climbers. This group also includes the popular English David Austin roses, very winter and higher elevation hardy Buck and Canadian shrub roses. Many are trouble-free, cold hardy, repeat bloomers and produce lovely, fragrant blooms. Try any of the following ones for our area, you won't be disappointed –

Modern Roses-

'*Carefree Beauty*' 6' x 5' hardy (zone 4) Buck shrub rose. Large, double pink, aging to light pink, fragrant blooms. Repeats from spring to frost, very disease resistant. Orange/red fall hips.

'*Golden Wings*' 5' x 5' hardy (zone 4), heat and somewhat shade tolerant shrub rose. Light yellow with orange red centers, single form petals, mild fragrance. Blooms from spring to frost on a light green foliage, carefree shrub.

'*Iceberg*' 4' x 4' (zone 5, winter protection), heat tolerant floribunda rose. Pure white double, fragrant blooms. Upright, glossy green foliage. Vigorous and very disease resistant and blooms from spring to frost.

'Julia Child' 3' x 3' (zone 5) very heat tolerant floribunda rose. Butter-yellow full, fragrant blooms on a compact, rounded bush. Very disease resistant and blooms repeatedly all summer.

'Linda Campbell' 5' x 6', hardy (zone 4) almost thornless hybrid rugosa shrub rose. Rich, double red blooms from spring to frost. Linda Campbell was a well known Denver rosarian and active member in the American Rose Society. Ralph Moore, a noted rose hybridizer and friend of Linda's, named this rose in her honor.

'Morden Sunrise' 3' x 3' very hardy (zone 3) Canadian shrub rose. Wavy semi-double copper tone yellow fragrant flowers eventually turning peach color. Very disease resistant and blooms from spring to frost with showy rose hips.

'Veterans's Honor' 4' x 5' (zone 5, winter protection) hybrid tea rose. Velvety dark red, raspberry-like fragrant hybrid tea bloom. Blooms in flushes throughout the season. Part of the proceeds from this rose go to the Department of Veterans Affairs.

'Winnipeg Parks' 3' x 3' very hardy (zone 3) Canadian shrub rose. Low growing double deep pink to cherry red, mildly fragrant blooms from spring to frost. Very disease resistant, young foliage is red turning dark green through the season. Showy fall hips last through the winter.

Miniature Roses-

'Denver's Dream' 2' x 2' (zone 5, protected) miniature rose. Copper, orange/red reverse cupped bloom. Blooms in flushes all season on semi-glossy, dark green, disease resistant foliage. Introduced in Denver for hosting the American Rose Society convention in 1995.

'Jeanne Lajoie' 7' x 8' hardy (zone 4) climbing miniature rose. Double pink, mild fragrant roses cover the plant from spring to frost, very vigorous. Bushy upright, arching growth that can be trained as a climber, very disease resistant.

Climbers-

'America' 6' x 12' hardy (zone 4) climbing rose. Salmon pink reverse double, fragrant blooms. Blooms in flushes throughout the season, very disease resistant. Introduced for the 1976 bicentennial.

'John Cabot' 8' x 10' extremely hardy (zone 2) large shrub or climbing rose. Rosy pink, double, mild fragrant blooms. Large flush of blooms each spring, occasional summer repeat on glossy, disease resistant foliage.

Betty Cahill is a member of the Denver Rose Society and the Rocky Mountain Chapter of the Herb Society