



“As I harvest flowers with my family, we get to encounter all of the critters who are also happy to see the pollen drenched roses.”

— MANDANA BOUSHEE

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ROSE PETAL

The wild rose will entice you with its beauty and scent, but should you approach too quickly or mindlessly, it will pounce with its thorns. Roses know how to protect! And it's not just their sweet flowers and fruits that they safeguard; the brambles are home to many including small creatures like mice and voles to bunnies, foxes, and birds.

Botanical names: *Rosa* spp. (including *R. canina*, *R. multiflora*, *R. nutkana*, *R. palustris*, *R. rugosa*, *R. woodsii*, and many other species)

Family: Rosaceae (rose)

Energetics: cooling, drying

Taste: sweet

Parts used: petals, leaves, fruits (see Wild Remedies Chapter 28, Rose Hip)

Properties: analgesic, antioxidant, aphrodisiac, aromatic, astringent, inflammatory modulator, nervine

Uses: depression, grief, inflammation, wounds

Preparations: food, hydrosol, honey, shrub, tea, tincture, vinegar

Wild roses are native to much of the Northern Hemisphere. They often love to grow near water but, depending on the species, they can tolerate drought conditions fairly well. Wherever they grow, roses have an extensive history of use as food and medicine that continues today.

MEDICINAL PROPERTIES AND ENERGETICS

Wild roses are deliciously aromatic, offering a sweet scent that can drift far beyond the flower's center. The silky flower petals are cooling and drying in nature, offering relief to hot and damp conditions. You can watch rose petals work in many different ways. They can physically mend tissues or restore skin health, and they also bring joy and lift your spirits.

PLANT GIFTS

Supports the Heart

Roses awaken your senses! As you approach a wild rose bramble on a warm summer day, the heady scent of the flowers may be the first to greet you. Or perhaps it's the hum of bees, busy with their work of sipping nectar and spreading pollen. The flowers themselves, simple yet beautiful, fill the bramble with their bursts of color. Gathering rose petals is a sensual experience, the silkiness of the petals caressing your fingers with each touch. It's no surprise that roses are known for bringing joy; how can you not feel vibrantly alive with roses in your life? Roses have long been given as gifts in love or friendship. Their presence alone is a gift of the heart.

While science may tell us that the heart is purely a physical organ incapable of emotion, roses know otherwise. Just as the heart experiences many emotions, roses aren't just for love. Herbalists also turn to roses for heartache and heartbreaks. In herbalist David Winston's famous Grief Relief formula, you'll find rose petals in combination with hawthorn leaves and mimosa bark.

Heals Wounds

Rose petals and leaves are antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory, and astringent, making them a powerful

remedy for addressing many types of wounds including bug bites and stings, cuts, scrapes, scratches, and anything else where inhibiting infection, decreasing inflammation, and pulling together the tissues is helpful.

Canker sores (called aphthous ulcers) are one example of how rose can heal and soothe tissues. In one double-blind, placebo-controlled study, a mouthwash made with rose extract was shown to be effective at relieving pain, decreasing inflammation, and reducing the size and number of ulcers in those suffering from recurrent canker sores.

Promotes Healthy Skin

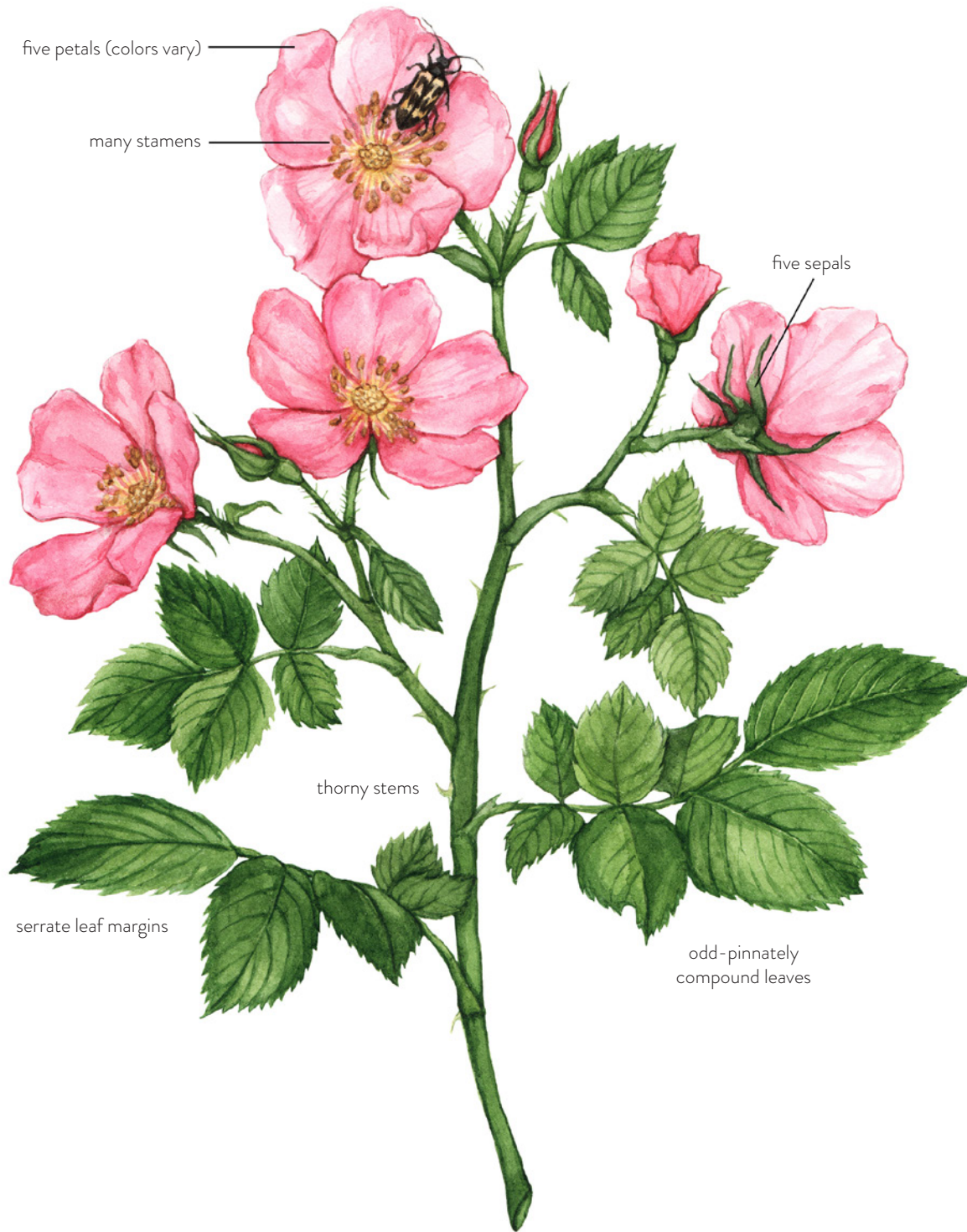
Rose petals are filled with bioflavonoids and are a lovely way to protect and nourish the skin. They can be infused into oils and made into creams for daily use. Rose petals can also be used topically as a poultice or as a hydrosol to heal skin after a sunburn.

Researchers showed that a shampoo made of rose petals and green tea extracts was effective at addressing scalp seborrheic dermatitis, which is a common condition that causes dandruff in adults or what is referred to as cradle cap in infants. Another study showed that rose hydrosol had antiproliferative properties in vitro. The researchers concluded that roses could help hyperproliferation-involved skin diseases such as eczema and psoriasis.

HOW TO IDENTIFY

It can be hard to tell one *Rosa* species from another, and they also hybridize. Any and all can make fine food and medicine if the petals smell fragrant. The same goes for cultivated roses, as long as they are grown without pesticides.

Wild rose stalks are covered in thorns and may be upright, climbing, trailing, or forming dense thickets. Unlike the multi-petalled roses that you might see at the florist or in a garden, wild roses have only five petals, along with five sepals and many stamens. They grow in varying shades of white, pink, scarlet, and yellow. The leaves are pinnately divided into an odd number (usually three to nine) of toothed leaflets. For a description of the fruits, or hips, see *Wild Remedies* Chapter 28, Rose Hip).



rose (*Rosa* spp.), shown with flower longhorn beetle (*Judolia montivagans*)

Life cycle: deciduous or evergreen woody perennial

Reproduces by: unbold seed, rhizome

Growth habit: thorny shrub, 1–15 feet tall

Habitat: woodland edges, forest understories, fields, meadows, pastures, hedgerows, riparian areas, stream banks, lake shores, marshes, coastal areas, dry slopes, roadsides

Sun: full sun to partial shade

Soil: dry to moist, well-drained

USDA Hardiness Zones: 3–9

ECOLOGICAL CONNECTIONS

Wild rose thickets provide nesting sites for birds and shelter for small mammals like rabbits and mice. A variety of animals eat the twigs and foliage, such as deer, elk, moose, bears, rabbits, and beavers. Moth caterpillars, sawfly larvae, beetles, and other insects also eat the foliage. Many insects gather the flower pollen, including honey bees, bumble bees, sweat bees, hoverflies, beetles, and others. Cynipid wasps lay their eggs on many species of rose, forming galls (learn more about galls in the Gardening Tips below).

HOW TO HARVEST

The flowers usually appear from spring to summer and may be gathered as rosebuds, fully opened flower heads, or just the petals. Gather them on a dry, sunny day using your fingers, scissors, or pruning shears. Wear gloves, if you wish.

Gather the leaves at any time. Avoid any leaves that look unhealthy and have fungal diseases like blackspot or powdery mildew.

Roses reproduce by seeds and rhizomes. Leave enough flowers on the plant so it can form hips and seeds. Roses also send out new shoots or suckers from their rootstock, which can be dug up and transplanted.

HARVESTING CAUTIONS

Roses do not have any poisonous lookalikes. However, some plants, like rock rose (*Cistus* spp.), are commonly called roses when they are not actually in the *Rosa* genus. That's why knowing the Latin botanical name is useful!

GARDENING TIPS

Permanent homes are necessary for roses as they are not easy to relocate. Allow space for their sprawling and large size, ideally with a little bit of afternoon shade. Limited space requires harsh pruning, which is not human-friendly. Prepare a loose and humus-rich soil and fertilize with composted manure. Propagation by seed and cuttings takes months, sometimes years. Either purchase native rose plants or gently remove new suckers from

existing plants and transplant. For best success and easy maintenance, select a variety that is native to your region. Water regularly and prune out dead branches to maintain air flow.

Wildlife may browse roses and the unique rose cane gall may appear on older bushes. The galls are created by the tiny cynipid female wasp that lays eggs in the leaf nodes. When the larvae hatch, they begin to eat the plant's tissue and the rose responds by generating excessive stem cell growth to cover the larvae who continue to eat the tissue, creating large, round masses that are often covered in moss-like growths. They can be removed by cutting off the branch or they can be observed for curiosity's sake as they do not cause any problems for the rose.

USING ROSE PETAL IN YOUR LIFE

Fresh and dried rose petals can be used as food in any way that you can imagine. Try sprinkling them over salads, desserts, or savory dishes and infusing them into preserves, syrups, and creams. Spice blends like Persian *advieh* and North African *ras el hanout* often include rose petals in the mix. Rose water or hydrosol can be a lovely addition to foods and drinks.

Rose petals can be used fresh or dried for medicine. They can be infused into alcohol or enjoyed in teas. Rose petal-infused vinegar can be used in beverages like shrubs and oxymels, or sprayed on the skin to soothe burns.

Recommended Amounts

- **Tincture:** 1:5 (dried) or 1:2 (fresh), 30–40%, 3–5 ml, 3 times a day
- **Tea:** 5–28 grams

Special Considerations

Avoid roses that have been sprayed with pesticides, especially roses that come from florists.



ROSE PETAL HONEY

This is a simple treat to make that tastes like ambrosia. The honey preserves the sensual aromatics of the rose while the petals are beautifully suspended in the honey. Serve it on toast, ice cream stir it into your tea, or simply eat it by the spoonful.

Choose rose petals that are aromatic and have not been sprayed. Unless they are visibly dirty, there is no need to wash the rose petals.

For best results, use local raw honey. If your honey has hardened, heat it very gently until it is in a liquid state. If you keep the temperature of the honey below 95°F, you will still maintain the characteristics of the raw honey. This infused honey will keep for years, although it is so delicious it probably won't last that long.

Yield: Variable

Fresh rose petals to fill a jar of your choosing

Honey to fill the jar

1. Place the rose petals in a jar that you can gently fill, avoid stuffing them in too tightly.
2. Fill the jar with honey. Stir the honey and petals well using a butter knife or chopstick to allow air bubbles to escape. If necessary, add more honey to fill the jar and stir well again.
3. The honey will be ready in 3 days. There is no need to strain the petals. Rose petal honey can be stored on the counter. If you live in a warm climate it can also be stored in the fridge to avoid fermentation.



ENDNOTES

Epigraph: Mandana Boushee, "To be a rose...", Mandana Boushee, June 14, 2019, <https://www.mandanaboushee.com/single-post/2019/06/14/To-be-a-rose>.

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“Wild Remedies abounds with plant lore, wisdom, and instruction. The authors have created a deeply thoughtful, insightful, and interactive book that enables readers to not only identify and forage wild foods, but also to create a deepening relationship with nature and the world of plants.”

– ROSEMARY GLADSTAR, HERBALIST

