

ROSE

BOTANICAL NAME: *Rosa*: FAMILY: *Rosaceae*

From earliest recordings of flowers the rose was thought to represent love, magic, hope and mystery. The name refers to its color and in Latin *Rosa* means red. The Greeks associated it with the blood of Aphrodite's love Adonis and the Romans used roses in feasts and orgies in which, on one occasion, guests were smothered with rose petals falling from the ceiling.



Before the sixteenth century, there were very few roses in the West and they rarely bloomed more than once a season. The Apothecary rose, *Rosa gallica*, was used by healers for almost any ailment from barrenness (cure was to swallow rose petals) to washing “molligrubs out of a moody brain.” The Dog rose, *Rosa canina*, was used to cure dog bites.

During the reign of Henry II there was a rose called ‘Rosa Mundi’ named for Henry’s mistress, Rosamund who he kept hidden in a labyrinth at Woodstock, near Oxford. Henry’s queen, Eleanor of Aquitaine, was very jealous and had Rosamund murdered. Hybrids and descendants of roses included white *Rosa x alba*, which represented the house of York in the Wars of the Roses. Also during the sixteenth century the first yellow rose was brought to Europe from Persia.

China roses were introduced into Europe at the end of the eighteenth century and were greatly prized as they bloomed continually. They were called Tea roses perhaps because they were shipped in boxes of tea and had the scent of tea. Because they were tender, they could not be grown out of doors until crossed with Hybrid Perpetuals. Now they are the basis of almost all of our modern roses.

The first Hybrid Tea rose was bred in France and named ‘La France.’ Napoleon’s Empress Josephine had one of the finest rose gardens in all of Europe. It is said she always carried a rose to put in front of her face when she smiled because her teeth were bad thus she hid behind her rose. She caused ships carrying roses to be allowed through the battle lines unscathed by both French and English for her gardens at Malmaison. Josephine named her roses for distinguished men, their wives, or their mistresses. Their names live today as seen in Madame Isaac Pereire who was the wife of a French banker; Madame Hardy was the wife of the superintendent of the Luxembourg Gardens and Madame Plantier was the wife of her head gardener. Similarly, we name our roses for the famous today. Will we remember the person or only the rose as time goes by?