

# Rose Petals, Buds, and Powder Profile

## Also known as

Rosa spp (centifolia, gallica, and damascena are the most common varieties), Provence Rose, French Rose, Cabbage Rose, Red Rose, and Pink Rose.

## Introduction

The rose has been valued for its beauty and its perfume for thousands of years. Because rose oil deteriorates rapidly with exposure to sun and wind, the content is highest on the first morning when the flower opens. Rose petals picked for distillation are picked manually, day by day, at or just before sunrise.

## Constituents

The distinctive scent of the rose derived from acyclic monoterpene alcohols, geraniol (up to 75%), citronellol (20%) and nerol (20%), and long-chain hydrocarbons like nonadecane or heneicosane (up to 10%). An important trace component of rose oil is beta-damascenone. Even though this chemical makes up only 0.01% of the weight of the rose, its presence or absence determines the appeal of the rose.

## Parts Used

Petals, and Buds

## Typical Preparations

Rose oil, rose water, ointments, and potpourri. Uses are very numerous and can be administered as a tea, poultice, bath herb, pillow mix, body spray, etc.

## Summary

The American Botanical Council reports that rose petals have sedative, antiseptic, antiparasitic, anti-inflammatory, laxative, cholesterol-lowering, and heart-supportive properties. An ointment called "Rosalin" was tested against several microorganisms with positive results, particularly the treatment of acute radiodermatitis and radionecrosis. It also showed benefits for cancer patients receiving radiation therapy. Psychological studies indicate that rose oil can induce "sweeter dreams" and increase concentration and rate of work capacity.

## Precautions

Avoid taking rose oil internally if you have gallstones. Potpourri and perfume do not present a problem.

## Family: N.O. Rosaceae

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Roses are a group of herbaceous shrubs found in temperate regions throughout both hemispheres. All the Roses of the Antipodes, South Africa and the temperate parts of South America have been carried there by cultivation.

The birthplace of the cultivated Rose was probably Northern Persia, on the Caspian, or Faristan on the Gulf of Persia. Thence it spread across Mesopotamia to Palestine and across Asia Minor to Greece. And thus it was that Greek colonists brought it to Southern Italy. It is beyond doubt that the Roses used in ancient days were cultivated varieties. Horace, who writes at length on horticulture, gives us an interesting account of the growing of Roses in beds. Pliny advises the deep digging of the soil for their better cultivation. In order to force their growth, it was the practice to dig a ditch round the plants and to pour warm water into the ditch just as the rose-buds had formed. The varieties were then very limited in number, but it would appear that the Romans, at all events, knew and cultivated the red Provins Rose (*Rosa gallica*), often mistakenly called the Provence Rose. The word *rosa* comes from the Greek word *rodon* (red), and the rose of the Ancients was of a deep crimson colour, which probably suggested the fable of its springing from the blood of Adonis.

The voluptuous Romans of the later Empire made lavish use of the blossoms of the Rose. Horace enjoins their unsparing use at banquets, when they were used not only as a means of decoration, but also to strew the floors, and even in winter the luxurious Romans expected to have petals of roses floating in their Falernian wine. Roman brides and bridegrooms were crowned with roses, so too were the images of Cupid and Venus and Bacchus. Roses were scattered at feasts of Flora and Hymen, in the paths of victors, or beneath their chariot-wheels, or adorned the prows of their war-vessels. Nor did the self-indulgent Romans disdain to wear rose garlands at their feasts, as a preventive against drunkenness. To them, the Rose was a sign of pleasure, the companion of mirth and wine, but it was also used at their



**French Rose**  
(*Rosa gallica*)

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funerals.

As soon as the Rose had become known to nations with a wide literature of their own, it was not only the theme of poets, but gave rise to many legends. Homer's allusions to it in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are the earliest records, and Sappho, the Greek poetess, writing about 600 B.C., selects the Rose as the Queen of Flowers. (The 'Rose of Sharon' of the Old Testament is considered to be a kind of Narcissus, and the 'Rose of Jericho' is a small woody annual, also not allied to the Rose.)

It was once the custom to suspend a Rose over the dinner-table as a sign that all confidences were to be held sacred. Even now the plaster ornament in the centre of a ceiling is known as 'the rose.' It has been suggested that because the Pretender could only be helped secretly, *sub rosa*, that the Jacobites took the white rose as his symbol. Although we have no British 'Order of the Rose,' our national flower figures largely in the insignia of other orders, such as the Garter, the order of the Bath, etc.

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---**Constituents**---The essential oil to which the perfume of the Rose is due is found in both flowers and leaves, sometimes in one, sometimes in both, and sometimes in neither, for there are also scentless roses. In the flower, the petals are the chief secreting part of the blossom, though a certain amount of essential oil resides in the epidermal layers of cells, both surfaces of the petals being equally odorous and secretive. An examination of the stamens, which are transformed into petals in the cultivated roses, shows that the epidermal cells also contain essential oil.

More than 10,000 roses are known in cultivation and three types of odours are recognized, viz. those of the Cabbage Rose (*R. centifolia*), the Damask Rose (*R. damascena*) and the Tea Rose (*R. indica*), but there are many roses of intermediate character as regards perfume, notably the 'perpetual hybrid' and 'hybrid tea' classes, which exhibit every gradation between the three types and no precise classification of roses by their odour is possible.

The flowers adapted for the preparation of essence of roses are produced by several species of rose trees. The varieties cultivated on a large scale for perfumery purposes are *R. damascena* and *R. centifolia*. *R. damascena* is cultivated chiefly in Bulgaria, Persia and India: it is a native of the Orient and was introduced into Europe at the period of the Crusades. *R. centifolia* is cultivated in Provence, Turkey and Tunis; it has been found wild in the forests of the Caucasus, where double-flowered specimens are often met with.

Although the Rose was highly esteemed in the dawn of history, it does not appear that it was then submitted to the still, the method of preserving the aroma being to steep the petals in oil, or possibly to extract it in the form of a pomade. The *Oleum Rosarum*, *Ol. rosatum* or *Ol. rosacetum* of the Ancients was not a volatile oil, but a fatty oil perfumed with rose petals. The first preparation of rosewater by Avicenna was in the tenth century. It was between 1582 and 1612 that the oil or OTTO OF ROSES was discovered, as recorded in two separate histories of the Grand Moguls. At the wedding feast of the princess Nour-Djihan with the Emperor Djihanguyr, son of Akbar, a canal circling the whole gardens was dug and filled with rose-water. The heat of the sun separating the water from the essential oil of the Rose, was observed by the bridal pair when rowing on the fragrant water. It was skimmed off and found to be an exquisite perfume. The discovery was immediately turned to account and the manufacture of Otto of Roses was commenced in Persia about 1612 and long before the end of the seventeenth century the distilleries of Shiraz were working on a large scale. The first mention of Persian Otto or Attar of Roses is by Kampfner (1683), who alludes to the export to India. Persia no longer exports Attar of Roses to any extent, and the production in Kashmir and elsewhere in India - probably as ancient as that of Persia - practically serves for local consumption only.

Through the Turks, the manufacture was introduced into Europe, by way of Asia Minor, where it has long been produced. It is probable that the first otto was distilled in Bulgaria, then part of the Turkish Empire, about 1690 - its sale in Europe, at a high cost, is first alluded to in 1694 - but the importance of the Turkish otto industry is of comparatively late growth, and Turkish otto is not mentioned as an article of English commerce until the beginning of the last century.

A small amount of Otto of Roses has been produced in the South of France for at least 150 years, having been an established industry there before the French Revolution, but these earlier French ottos, almost entirely derived from *R. centifolia*, as a by-product in rose-water distillation, were consumed in the country itself. French roses were almost exclusively used for the manufacture of rosepomade and of rose-water, the French rosewater having the reputation of being superior in odour to any that can be produced in England. In spite of their unrivalled delicacy of fragrance, which always commanded a high place in the estimation of connoisseurs, until recent years the high price and lack of body of French ottos did not enable them to compete for general purposes with the Balkan concrete oil. When, however, Bulgaria joined the Central Empires, the French seized their opportunity, and methods of distillation were modernized, improved stills were erected and many other blooms than those of *R. centifolia* were experimented with, until now French otto has made itself a place in perfumery. Large plantations of roses have been laid down, and the output of otto is increasing steadily, 10,000 to 20,000 OZ. being at present the annual production. French chemists, botanists and horticulturists have studied the scientific aspect of the Rose, and in the new roses introduced, the chief object has been to improve the odour rather than the appearance of the flower. The variety of rose mostly cultivated is the *Rose de Mai*, a hybrid of *R. gallica* and *R. centifolia*, bearing recurved prickles on the flowering branches. Two types are grown in the Grasse district, one more spiny than the other. They are mingled in the plantations, but the more spiny is preferred for less irrigated ground and the one with fewer thorns for wellwatered land. The bushes are planted half a metre apart, in rows one metre asunder. The first fortnight in May sees the rose harvest. The buds open gradually and are numerous, as each stalk bears a dense cluster and all the annual stems are well-covered. In the second half of May, after flowering, they are cut back and the complete pruning takes place in the following November. A rose plantation lasts from eight to ten years. Five thousand rose-trees will occupy about 1/2 acre of land and will produce about 2,200 lb. of flowers during the season. It is necessary to distil about 10,000 lb. of roses to obtain 1 lb. of oil. By the volatile solvents process a similar quantity will give anything up to 10 lb. of concrete. The rose-trees cultivated at Grasse in the last few years have been much attacked by disease, and in the opinion of some authorities the variety most grown hitherto would appear to be degenerating. The plantations are all more or less attacked by the rose rust parasite (*Pragmidium subcorticium*).

Quite recently a new and very promising rose has been introduced, known as the *Rose de Hai*, produced by crossing *R. damascena* with 'General Jacqueminot,' which in its turn is derived from *R. rugosa*, or the Japanese and Kamschatkan Rose. It has the advantage of not being so sensitive to heat and cold as the *Rose de Mai* and can be cultivated in the north of France, or as far south as Algeria. Its flowering period is much longer than that of the *Rose de Mai* and it gives more blooms and the oil is of almost equal quality. A certain amount of French otto is also distilled from garden roses. 'Ulrich Brunner,' distilled with other garden blooms, give a fair quality oil or concrete, known as 'Roses de France.' Other varieties which frequently enter into the composition of 'Roses de France' concretes are 'Grussan Teplitz,' 'Frau Karl Druschky,' Narbonnand, Van Houtte, Safrano, Paul Neyron, Madame Gabriel Luizet, Madame Caroline Testout, Baronne de Rothschild, Mrs. John Laing, Madame Maurice de Luze, François Juranville, Gerbe Rose and Gloire d'un Enfant d'Hiram.

*Oil of Rose* is light yellow in colour, sometimes possessing a green tint. It has a strong odour of fresh

roses. When cooled, it congeals to a translucent soft mass, which is again liquefied by the warmth of the hand. The congealing point lies between 15 degrees and 22 degrees C., mostly between 17 degrees and 21 degrees C.

The composition of Rose oil is not quite uniform, the variation being due to a number of influences, the chief being the kind of flower and the locality in which it has been grown. The Rose oil from plants grown in colder climates contains a very high percentage of the waxy substance stearoptene, odourless and valueless as a perfume. This was the first constituent of Rose oil to be studied and was recognized as paraffin hydrocarbon by Fluckiger: it consists of a mixture of hydrocarbons. Sometimes this stearoptene is removed by large distillers and the resulting oil sold at a higher price as stearoptene-free Otto of Roses. Geraniol and Citronellol are the chief ingredients of Rose oil as regards percentage, though not the most characteristic as regards odour. Citronellol, a fragrant, oily liquid, forms about 35 per cent of the oil. Geraniol, which may be present to the amount of 75 per cent, is a colourless liquid, with a sweet, rose-like odour. It is also found in Palmarosa or Turkish Geranium oil and in oils of Citronella, Lavender, Neroli, Petit Grain, Ylang Ylang, Lemongrass and some Eucalyptus oils. It is largely obtained industrially from the oils of Palmarosa and Citronella and is much used to adulterate Otto of Roses. The temptation to adulterate so expensive an oil is great and it is widely practised. Bulgaria usually exports from 30 to 60 per cent more otto than is distilled in the country. This is due to the enormous amount of adulteration that takes place. This is so well done that a chemical analysis is imperative to ascertain the purity of the oil. The principal adulterant is Geraniol. The addition of this, or of Palmarosa oil, which contains it, either to the rose leaves before distillation, or to the product, reduces the congealing point, but this can be brought up to the normal standard by the addition of spermaceti. Hence in addition to the congealing point, the determination of the absence of spermaceti may become necessary. Another recent adulterant of importance, employed in Bulgaria, is the Guaiac Wood Oil, from *Bulnesia sarmienti*, which has an agreeable tea-rose-like odour. It can be recognized by the microscopic examination of the form of the crystals of guaicol, which separate from the oil on cooling. Guaicol forms needle-shaped crystals which are characterized by a channel-like middle-line. The crystals of the Rose oil paraffin are smaller and thinner and possess less sharply-outlined forms. The addition of Guaiac Wood oil to Rose oil raises the congealing point of the oil and increases the specific gravity and its presence may thus be detected.

A satisfactory artificial Otto of Rose cannot be obtained by the exclusive combination of aromatic chemicals, some of the natural oil must always enter into the composition of any artificial rose oil, or a purely synthetic oil may be distilled over a certain quantity of rose petals. A striking difference between synthetic and natural rose oils is that the former is almost entirely deodorized by iodine, while the latter is unaffected in this respect.

Apart from French Otto of Roses, the world's supply is mainly drawn from Bulgaria, the greater part being distilled by small peasant growers. The Bulgarian rose industry is confined to one special mountain district, having for its centre the town of Kazanlik. The rose district is about 80 miles long and about 30 miles wide and its average elevation about 1,300 feet above the sea-level. Attempts to extend the rose culture to other neighbouring districts in Bulgaria have proved a failure. The rose bush seems to thrive best in sandy soil, well exposed to the sun, protected from the cold winter winds and having perfect drainage. It is chiefly the mountain formation, the climatic peculiarities and the special sandy soil of the rose district which adapt it for this industry, in which, in addition to their other farm culture, about 180 villages are engaged. There are about 20,000 small proprietors of rose gardens, each one owning about 1 acre of rose plantation, which, when well tended, is calculated to yield at the average 100 lb. of flowers every day for three weeks.

Only two varieties of roses are cultivated in Bulgaria, the Damask Rose (*R. damascena*), light red in colour and very fragrant, with 36 petals, and the Musk Rose (*R. muscatta*), a snow-white rose, far less fragrant, yielding an oil of poorer quality, very rich in stearoptene, but containing very little otto. It is of more vigorous growth and is grown chiefly for hedges between the plantations to indicate the divisions of the rose fields. The rose bushes only yield one crop a year, the harvest beginning in the latter half of May and lasting from two to five weeks, according to the weather. The weather during the rose harvest has a great influence on the quality and quantity of the crop - should it be exceptionally dry and hot, the crop may only last two weeks and be poor, but if it be cool, with some rainfall, there is a rich yield, lasting over four or even six weeks. The weather during the budding season has also to be reckoned with, dry and hot weather causing the bushes to throw out only very small clusters of buds, while in favourable weather 13, 21 and even 18 buds will be found in the clusters. The flowers are gathered in the early morning, just before the sun rises and the picking should cease by ten or eleven o'clock, unless the day be cloudy, when it continues all day. The flowers are distilled on the same day. It takes 30 roses to make 1 drop of otto and 60,000 roses (about 180 lb. of flowers) to make 1 OZ. of otto.

The small stills used by the farmers are very simple and primitive and are only capable of distilling at a time 24 lb. of flowers, but they are gradually being replaced by modern, improved, large steam stills, which obtain results immeasurably greater. In 1918, some far-sighted and influential rose essence producers in Bulgaria combined to unite all parties interested in this industry into an association for mutual advantage. Of the membership of 5,000 nearly half were collective members, i.e. co-operative societies, so that the membership represents a very large number of growers. The objects of the association are: (1) to procure cheap credit for its members; (2) to prevent adulteration; (3) to organize joint distillation; (4) to provide the societies with the requisite apparatus for producing the otto.

The Bulgarian rose industry has developed steadily since 1885, though the Great War seriously handicapped it.

Bulgarian rose distillers do not obtain all their otto direct from the petals, but draw the greater part by treating the water. They charge the alembic with ten kills of flowers (about 25 lb.) and about 50 litres of water. They draw from this charge, 10 litres of distilled water, from which they gather a very small quantity of green concrete essence. When they have made four distillations, they carefully collect the 40 litres of water and redistil, and obtain 10 or 15 litres of liquid. It is reckoned that 4,000 kilos of flowers yield 1 kilo of otto, of which only one-third - the green essence - comes from the first distillation and the other two-thirds - yellow - are the result of re-distilling the waters. This is the reason why in France, some 10,000 kilos of flowers are required for 1 kilo of oil, as French distillers do not re-distil the waters; these are sold separately. The product of the first operation is of markedly superior quality.

In 1919 the entire Bulgarian crop of Otto of Roses was taken over by the Government of that country in consequence of an agreement between the Bulgarian Government and the United States Food Administration, by which payment for food supplied to Bulgaria from America was to be made out of the proceeds of the Bulgarian otto crop.

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**---Cyprus Otto of Roses---**In Cyprus, rose cultivation for Otto has of late years been keenly developed. It had been prepared since 1897 in a very small way with native stills at the village of Milikouri, where the Damask Rose is abundant, but no attempt had been made to extract the Rose oil by means of a modern still. The closing of the market for Bulgarian Otto of Roses, owing to the War, gave an impetus to the industry, and in the spring of 1917 the Department of Agriculture of Cyprus sent qualified officers to superintend the work at Milikouri and to carry out an experimental distillation. The samples

of 1917 oil sent to the Imperial Institute were found to be similar to the Bulgarian article, though rather weaker.

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**---Roses in Germany, Algiers and Morocco---**Otto of Roses is also prepared in Algiers to a limited extent and in Germany, from large rose plantations near Leipzig.

The cultivation of roses is already extensively practised in Morocco for the distillation of rose-water, which enters so largely into native perfumery, but there is no production of Otto of Roses on a commercial scale.

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**---Indian Rose Otto---**The two main centres of the Rose industry in India are Ghazipore and Hathras, in Upper India. Rose plantations exist in the neighbourhood of both these places, but the industry is confined to the manufacture of rose-water and small quantities of Aytar - a mixture of Sandalwood oil and Otto of Roses.

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**---Medicinal Action and Uses---**The petals of the dark red Rose, *R. gallica*, known as the Provins Rose, are employed medicinally for the preparation of an infusion and a confection. In this country it is specially grown for medicinal purposes in Oxfordshire and Derbyshire.

The petals of this rose are of a deep, purplish-red, velvety in texture, paler towards the base. They have the delicate fragrance of the Damask Rose and a slightly astringent taste.

The British Pharmacopoeia directs that Red Rose petals are to be obtained only from *R. gallica*, of which, however, there are many variations, in fact there are practically no pure *R. gallica* now to be had, only hybrids, so that the exact requirements of the British Pharmacopoeia are difficult to follow. Those used in medicine and generally appearing in commerce are actually any scented roses of a deep red colour, or when dried of a deep rose tint. The main point is that the petals suitable for medicinal purposes must yield a deep rose-coloured and somewhat astringent and fragrant infusion when boiling water is poured upon them. The most suitable are the so-called Hybrid Perpetuals, flowering from June to October, among which may be specially recommended the varieties:

*Eugène Furst*, deep dark red, sweet-scented.

*General Jacqueminot*, a fine, rich crimson, scented rose.

*Hugh Dickson*, rather a large petalled one, but of a fine, deep red colour and sweetscented.

*Ulrich Brunner*, bright-red.

*Richmond*, deep crimson-red.

*Liberty*, scarlet-red.

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**---Collection and Preparation---**When employed for the preparation of the drug, only flower-buds just about to open are collected, no fully-expanded flowers. They must only be gathered in dry weather and no petals of any roses that have suffered from effects of damp weather must be taken. The whole of the unexpanded petals are plucked from the calyx so that they remain united in small conical masses, leaving the stamens behind. Any stamens that may have come away with the petals should be shaken out. The lighter-coloured, lower portion is then cut off from the deep purplish-red upper part. The little masses, kept as entire as possible, are used in the fresh state for preparation of the 'confection,' but for

making the infusion, they are dried carefully and quickly on trays in a good current of warm air. They are dried until crisp and while crisp packed in tins that the colour and crispness may be retained. If exposed to the air, they will re-absorb moisture and lose colour.

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---**Constituents, Red Rose Pedals**---The important constituent of Red Rose petals is the red colouring matter of an acid nature. There have also been isolated two yellow crystalline substances, the glucoside *Quercitrin*, which has been found in many other plants and *Quercetin*, yielded when Quercitrin is boiled with a dilute mineral acid. The astringency is due to a little gallic acid, but it has not yet been definitely proved whether quercitannic acid, the tannin of oak bark, is also a constituent. The odour is due to a very small amount of volatile oil, not identical with the official *Ol. Rosae*. A considerable amount of sugar, gum, fat, etc., are also present.

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---**Preparations**---Red Rose petals are official in nearly all Pharmacopoeias. Though formerly employed for their mild astringency and tonic value, they are to-day used almost solely to impart their pleasant odour to pharmaceutical preparations. The British Pharmacopoeia preparations are a *Confection*, *Acid Infusion* and a *Fluid Extract*. The *Confection* is directed to be made by beating 1 lb. of fresh Red Rose petals in a stone mortar with 3 lb. of sugar. It is mostly used in pill making. Formerly this was prescribed for haemorrhage of the lungs and for coughs. The United States official confection is made by rubbing Red Rose petals, powdered, with heated rose-water, adding gradually fine, white sugar and heating the whole together till thoroughly mixed. The *Fluid Extract* is made from powdered Red Rose petals with glycerine and dilute alcohol. It is of a deep red colour, an agreeable odour of rose and of a pleasant, mildly astringent taste. *The Acid Infusion* is made from dried, broken-up, Red Rose petals, diluted with sulphuric acid, sugar and boiling water, infused in a covered vessel for 15 minutes and strained. It has a fine red colour and agreeable flavour and has been employed for its astringent effects in the treatment of stomatitis and pharyngitis. Its virtue is principally due to the aromatic sulphuric acid which it contains and the latter ingredient renders it a useful preparation, in the treatment of night sweats resulting from depression. A *Simple (non-acid) Infusion* is mainly used as a flavouring for other medicines. It is also used as a lotion for ophthalmia, etc.

*Syrup of Red Rose*, official in the United States Pharmacopoeia, is used to impart an agreeable flavour and odour to other syrups and mixtures. The syrup is of a fine red colour and has an agreeable, acidulous, somewhat astringent taste. *Honey of Roses*, also official in the United States Pharmacopoeia, is prepared from clarified honey and fluid extract of roses. It is considered more agreeable than ordinary honey and somewhat astringent. In olden days, Honey of Roses was popular for sore throats and ulcerated mouth and was made by pounding fresh petals in a small quantity of boiling water, filtering the mass and boiling the liquid with honey. *Rose Vinegar*, a specific on the Continent for headache caused by hot sun, is prepared by steeping dried rose petals in best distilled vinegar, which should not be boiled. Cloths or linen rags are soaked in the liquid and are then applied to the head.

Two liqueurs made by the French also have rose petals as one of the chief ingredients. A small quantity of spirits of wine is distilled with the petals to produce 'Spirit of Roses.' The fragrant spirit, when mixed with sugar, undergoes certain preparatory processes and makes the liqueur called 'L' Huile de Rose.' It is likewise the base of another liqueur, called 'Parfait Amour.'

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# Rosa centifolia

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The pale petals of the Hundred-leaved Rose or Cabbage Rose are also used in commerce. On account of its fragrance, the petals of this variety of rose are much used in France for distillation of rose-water. Though possessing aperient properties, they are seldom now used internally and preparations of them are not official in the British Pharmacopoeia.

The roses grouped as varieties of *R. centifolia* have all less scent than *R. gallica*.

The best of them is the old Cabbage Rose. It is a large rose, sweet-scented, of a pink or pale rose-purple colour, the petals whitish towards the base. Its branches are covered with numerous nearly straight spines: the petioles and peduncles are nearly unarmed, but more or less clothed with glandular bristles and the leaves have five or sometimes seven ovate, glandular leaflets, softly hairy beneath. This species and its varieties have given rise to innumerable handsome garden roses.

The flowers are collected and deprived of the calyx and ovaries, the petals alone being employed. In drying, they become brownish and lose some of their delicious rose odour.

The *Constituents* of the Pink Rose are closely similar to those of the Red. The very little colouring matter is apparently identical with that of the Red Rose. A little tannin is present.

*Rose-water.* The British Pharmacopoeia directs that it shall be prepared by mixing the distilled rose-water of commerce, obtained mostly from *R. damascena*, but also from *R. centifolia* and other species, with twice its volume of distilled water immediately before use. It is used as a vehicle for other medicines and as an eye lotion. *Triple rose-water* is water saturated with volatile oil of Rose petals, obtained as a by-product in the distillation of oil of Roses. The finest rose-water is obtained by distillation of the fresh petals. It should be clear and colourless, not mucilaginous, and to be of value medicinally must be free from all metallic impurities, which may be detected by hydrogen sulphide and ammonium sulphide, neither of which should produce turbidity in the water.

*Ointment of rose-water*, commonly known as *Cold Cream*, enjoys deserved popularity as a soothing, cooling application for chapping of the hands, face, abrasions and other superficial lesions of the skin. For its preparation, the British Pharmacopoeia directs that 1 1/2 OZ. each of spermaceti and white wax be melted with 9 OZ. of Almond oil, the mixture poured into a warmed mortar and 7 fluid ounces of rose-water and 8 minims of oil of Rose then incorporated with it.

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**---Medicinal Action and Uses---**The old herbalists considered the Red Rose to be more binding and more astringent than any of the other species:

'it strengtheneth the heart, the stomach, the liver and the retentive faculty; is good against all kinds of fluxes, prevents vomiting, stops tickling coughs and is of service in consumption. '

Culpepper gives many uses for the Rose, both white and red and damask.



**Cabbage Rose**  
(*Rosa centifolia* LINN.)

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'Of the Red Roses are usually made many compositions, all serving to sundry good uses, viz. electuary of roses, conserve both moist and dry, which is usually called sugar of roses, syrup of dry roses and honey of roses; the cordial powder called aromatic rosarum, the distilled water of roses, vinegar of roses, ointment and oil of roses and the rose leaves dried are of very great use and effect.'

'The electuary,' he tells us, 'is purging and is good in hot fevers, jaundice and jointaches. The moist conserve is of much use both binding and cordial, the old conserve mixed with aromaticum rosarum is a very good preservative in the time of infection. The dry conserve called the sugar of roses is a very good cordial against faintings, swoonings, weakness and trembling of the heart, strengthens a weak stomach, promotes digestion and is a very good preservative in the time of infection. The dry conserve called the sugar of roses is a very good cordial to strengthen the heart and spirit. The syrup of roses cooleth an over-heated liver and the blood in agues, comforteth the heart and resisteth putrefaction and infection. Honey of roses is used in gargles and lotions to wash sores, either in the mouth, throat or other parts, both to cleanse and heal them. Red rose-water is well known, it is cooling, cordial, refreshing, quickening the weak and faint spirits, used either in meats or broths to smell at the nose, or to smell the sweet vapours out of a perfume pot, or cast into a hot fire-shovel. It is of much use against the redness and inflammation of the eyes to bathe therewith and the temples of the head. The ointment of roses is much used against heat and inflammation of the head, to anoint the forehead and temples and to cool and heal red pimples. Oil of roses is used to cool hot inflammation or swellings and to bind and stay fluxes of humours to sores and is also put into ointments and plasters that are cooling and binding. The dried leaves of the red roses are used both outwardly and inwardly; they cool, bind and are cordial. Rose-leaves and mint, heated and applied outwardly to the stomach, stay castings, strengthen a weak stomach and applied as a fomentation to the region of the liver and heart, greatly cool and temper them, quiet the over-heated spirits and cause rest and sleep. The decoction of red roses made with white wine and used is very good for head-ache and pains in the eyes, ears, throat and gums.'

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---**Preparations**---Rose-water, B.P., 1 to 2 OZ. Fluid extract, 1/2 to 1 drachm. Confec., B.P. and U.S.P., 2 to 4 drachms. Infusion acid, B.P., 1/2 to 1 OZ. Syrup U.S.P. Oil, B.P.

In modern herbal medicine the flowers of the common Red Rose dried are given in infusions and sometimes in powder for haemorrhage. A tincture is made from them by pouring 1 pint of boiling water on 1 OZ. of the dried petals, adding 15 drops of oil of Vitriol and 3 or 4 drachms of white sugar. The tincture when strained is of a beautiful red colour. Three or four spoonfuls of the tincture taken two or three times a day are considered good for strengthening the stomach and a pleasant remedy in all haemorrhages.

Culpepper mentions a syrup made of the *pale* red petals of the Damask Rose by infusing them 24 hours in boiling water, then straining off the liquor and adding twice the weight of refined sugar to it, stating that this syrup is an excellent purge for children and adults of a costive habit, a small quantity to be taken every night. A conserve of the buds has the same properties as the syrup.

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## WILD ROSES

- [Dog Rose](#)

- [Field Rose](#)
- [Sweet Briar](#)
- [Burnet Rose](#)
- [Downy Rose](#)

The actual number of the roses indigenous to Great Britain is a subject open to dispute among botanists, as the roses found wild show many variations. Most authorities agree that there are only five distinct types or species: *R. canina*, the Dog Rose; *R. arvensis*, the Field Rose; *R. rubiginosa*, Sweet Briar; *R. spinosissima*, the Burnet Rose; and *R. villosa*, the Downy Rose.

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## Dog Rose

### Botanical: *Rosa canina*

The DOG ROSE (*R. canina*) is a flower of the early summer, its blossoms expanding in the first days of June and being no more to be found after the middle of July. The general growth of the Dog Rose is subject to so much variation that the original species defined by Linnaeus has been divided by later botanists into four or five subspecies. The flowers vary very considerably in colour, from almost white to a very deep pink, and have a delicate but refreshing fragrance. The scarlet fruit, or hip (a name that has come down from the Anglo-Saxon *hiope*), is generally described as 'flask-shaped.' It is what botanists term a false fruit, because it is really the stalk-end that forms it and grows up round the central carpels, enclosing them as a case; the *real* fruits, each containing one seed, are the little hairy objects within it. Immediately the flower has been fertilized, the receptacle round the immature fruits grows gradually luscious and red and forms the familiar 'hip,' which acts as a bait for birds, by whose agency the seeds are distributed. At first the hips are tough and crowned with the fiveleft calyx leaves, later in autumn they fall and the hips are softer and more fleshy.

The pulp of the hips has a grateful acidity. In former times when garden fruit was scarce, hips were esteemed for dessert. Gerard assures us that 'the fruit when it is ripe maketh the most pleasante meats and banketting dishes as tartes and such-like,' the making whereof he commends 'to the cunning cooke and teethe to eate them in the riche man's mouth.' Another old writer says:

'Children with great delight eat the berries thereof when they are ripe and make chains and other pretty geegaws of the fruit; cookes and gentlewomen make tarts and suchlike dishes for pleasure.'

The Germans still use them to make an ordinary preserve and in Russia and Sweden a kind of wine is made by fermenting the fruit.

Rose hips were long official in the British Pharmacopoeia for refrigerant and astringent properties, but are now discarded and only used in medicine to prepare the confection of hips used in conjunction with other drugs, the pulp being separated from the skin and hairy seeds and beaten up with sugar. It is astringent and considered strengthening to the stomach and useful in diarrhoea and dysentery, allaying thirst, and for its pectoral qualities good for coughs and spitting of blood. Culpepper states that the hips are 'grateful to the taste and a considerable restorative, fitly given to consumptive persons, the conserve



**Dog Rose**  
(*Hyssopus officinalis* LINN.)

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being proper in all distempers of the breast and in coughs and tickling rheums' and that it has 'a binding effect and helps digestion.' He also states that 'the pulp of the hips dried and powdered is used in drink to break the stone and to ease and help the colic.' The constituents of rose hips are malic and citric acids, sugar and small quantities of tannin, resin, wax, malates, citrates and other salts.

The *leaves* of the Dog Rose when dried and infused in boiling water have often been used as a substitute for tea and have a grateful smell and sub-astringent taste. The *flowers*, gathered in the bud and dried, are said to be more astringent than the Red Roses. They contain no honey and are visited by insects only for their pollen. Their scent is not strong enough to be of any practical use for distillation purposes.

Two explanations have been put forward for the popular name of this wild rose. The first is founded on an ancient tradition that the root would cure a bite from a mad dog (Pliny affirming that men derived their knowledge of its powers from a dream); and the other and more probable theory that it was the Dag Rose - 'dag' being a dagger - because of its great thorns, and like the 'Dogwood' (originally Dagwood) became changed into 'Dog' by people who did not understand the allusion.

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## FIELD ROSE

### **Botanical: *Rosa arvensis***

The FIELD ROSE (*R. arvensis*) is generally a much more trailing rose than the Dog Rose, a characteristic which distinguishes it from all our other wild roses. It is widely distributed throughout England, but is much less common in Scotland and Ireland.

The leaves in general form are similar to those of the Dog Rose, but are often rather smaller and their surfaces more shining. The prickles, too, are somewhat smaller in size, but are more hooked. The flowers are white, much less fragrant than those of the Dog Rose and sometimes even scentless. Though occasionally occurring singly on the stem, they are generally in small bunches of three or four at the ends of the twigs, though only one of these at a time will as a rule be found expanded. This species generally comes into blossom rather later than the Dog Rose and continues in bloom a good deal longer. It is one of the chief ornaments of our hedge-rows, in the summer, from the profusion of its blossoms and long trailing stems; and in the autumn, by its scarlet hips, which are more globular in form than those of the Dog Rose. It has its styles united into a central column and not free or separate, as in the Dog Rose.

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**Field Rose**  
(*Rosa arvensis*)

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# SWEET BRIAR

## Botanical: *Rosa rubiginosa*

The flowers of the Sweet Briar are a little smaller than those of the Dog Rose and generally of a deeper hue, though of a richer tint in some plants than in others. They are in bloom during June and July. The fruit is eggshaped, its broadest part being uppermost or farthest from the stem.

The specific name *rubiginosa* signifies, in Latin, 'rusty,' the plant having been thus named as both stems and leaves are often of a brownish-red tint. It delights in open copses, though is sometimes found also in old hedgerows and is more specially met with in chalk districts in the south of England.

Its fragrance of foliage is peculiarly its own and has led to it holding a cherished place in many old gardens. Under its older name of Eglantine its praises have been sung by poets.

It takes a shower to bring out the full sweetness of Sweet Briar, when its strong and refreshing fragrance will fill the air and be borne a long distance by the breeze. Though the leaves are so highly odorous, the flowers are almost entirely without scent.

Sweet Briar only obtains a place among perfumes in name, for like many other sweetscented plants, it does not repay the labour of collecting its odour, the fragrant part of the plant being destroyed more or less under treatment. An Essence under this name is, however, prepared, compounded of various floral essences so blended as to resemble the spicy fragrance of the growing plant. In olden days the Sweet Briar was used medicinally.

Briarwood pipes are not made from the wood of either the Sweet Briar or of any wild rose, but from that of the Tree Heath (*Erica arborea*).

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**Sweetbriar Rose**  
(*Rosa eglanteria* printed as  
*Rosa rubiginosa*)

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# BURNET ROSE

## Botanical: *Rosa spinosissima*

The BURNET ROSE (*R. spinosissima*), known also as the Pimpernel Rose, or Scotch Rose, is generally found on waste land near the sea, more rarely on dry, heath-clad hills inland. The whole plant rarely attains to more than a foot or so in height. Its stems are armed with numerous, straight thorns - hence its specific name, signifying in Latin 'exceedingly prickly.' The English name is given it from the fact that the general form of its small leaves, with seven or nine leaflets to each leaf, is very similar to those of the Burnet (*Poterium sanguisorba*) and the Burnet Saxifrage (*Pimpinella*).

The white or sulphur-tinted flowers are usually placed singly and are



**Scotch Rose**  
(*Rosa pimpinellifolia* printed as  
*Rosa spinosissima*)

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rather small. The roundish fruit is so deep a purple as to appear almost black. The juice of the ripe fruit has been used in the preparation of dye: diluted with water, it dyes silk and muslin of a peach colour and mixed with alum gives a beautiful violet, but is considered too fugitive to be of any real economic value.

This rose is frequently cultivated in gardens and a great many varieties have been raised from it. The first double variety was found in a wild state in the neighbourhood of Perth and from this one were produced about 50 others. The French have over 100 distinct varieties.

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## DOWNY ROSE

**Botanical:** *Rosa villosa*

The DOWNY ROSE (*R. villosa*) is found only in England in the north and west, but is common in Scotland, Ireland and Wales. It receives its specific name from the downy texture of both sides of the leaves, the Latin word *villosa* meaning softly hairy.

This species is subject to many variations, five or six of which have been by some botanists considered separate species. The flowers are white or pale pink. The fruit, which is globular, is covered with fine prickles.

The stems of the various kinds of wild rose are often found tufted with little fluffy balls of what look like crimson moss. These are really galls and result from the puncture of a small insect, a kind of wasp - the *Rose Gall* - in a similar manner as Oak Galls are formed. The wasp punctures a leaf while it is yet undeveloped in the bud and there lays its eggs. Immediately the normal growth of the leaf alters and numerous larvae are formed, which hatch out and creep further into the leaf tissues until the whole swells into the moss-like gall we know. In the Middle Ages these Rose Galls, under the name of Bedeguar, were held in high repute in medicine for their astringency and supposed power of inducing sleep if placed under the pillow at night.

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### POT-POURRI OF ROSES

All varieties of both *R. gallica* and *R. centifolia* are used in the making of pot-pourri, the dried petals of all scented roses being valuable for the purpose as they retain their scent for a considerable time. Nearly every fragrant flower and scented leaf can be used as an ingredient of pot-pourri, blending with suitable spices to give charm to this favourite, old-fashioned sweet mixture, which in winter recalls so

delightfully the vanished summer days. It must be understood that rose-petals should preponderate, and that the other component parts ought to be added in such proportions that the scent of one cannot kill the perfume of another.

There are two principal methods of making pot-pourri, the *dry* and the *moist*.

For the *dry* kind, the bulk of the rosepetals is fully dried and everything else - Sweet Geranium and Sweet Verbena leaves, Bay leaves and Lavender is also dried. The best way of drying is to spread out on sheets of paper in an airy room. Anything of lasting scent, such as cedar or sandalwood sawdust, or shavings, can be added. When all is ready, the spices and sweet gums, all in powder, are put together and the whole is thoroughly mixed. For two-thirds of a bushel of dried petals and leaves, the *spice mixture* is 2 OZ. each of Cloves, Mace and Cinnamon, 1/2 OZ. each of Coriander, Allspice, Gum Storax and Gum Benzoin, and 4 OZ. Violet Powder.

The *moist* method of preparation takes more time and needs greater care. The rose leaves are not fully, but only partly dried, so that they lose a good half of their bulk and acquire a kind of tough, leathery consistency. To preserve them and to maintain them in this state, a certain proportion of salt is added. The salt is a mixture of half Bay salt and half common salt. Bay Salt is sold in lumps, these are roughly pounded, so that some of it is quite small and the larger pieces are about the size of a small hazel nut, and then mixed with the common salt. The roses must be absolutely dry when picked. The petals are stripped off and carefully separated and laid out to partially dry. The length of time depends on the temperature and atmospheric conditions, but they are usually ready the second day after picking. Large jars of glazed earthenware should be employed for storing the rose leaves, the most convenient being cylindrical, with lids of the same glazed ware and with flat leaded disks (supplied with handles), for pressing down the contents. Put two good handfuls of the rose leaves in at a time and press them down with the handled rammer. Then sprinkle a small handful of the salt mixture, then more rose leaves and so on. Then weight down till the next batch is put in. Besides rose leaves, the other chief ingredient is leaves of the Sweet Geranium, torn into shreds, dried like the Roses and put into the jars in the same way, rammed, salted and pressed. Bay leaves, Sweet Verbena and Lavender are all of a drier nature and can be put into the jars and salted just as they are. When all is ready, the contents of the preparation jars are taken out and broken up small; the mass, especially of the rose-petals, will come out in thick flakes, closely compacted. It is then mixed with the spices and sweet powders. If the freshly made mixture be rammed rather tightly into a jar or wooden barrel and left for six months, or better still for a year, the quality is much improved by being thus matured.

Mr. Donald McDonald, in *Sweet-scented Flowers and Fragrant Leaves*, gives the following pot-pourri recipes.

I. Gather early in the day and when perfectly dry, a peck of Roses, pick off the petals and strew over them 3/4 lb. common salt. Let them remain two or three days and if fresh flowers are added, some more salt must be sprinkled over them. Mix with the roses 1/2 lb. of finely powdered Bay salt, the same quantity of allspice, cloves and brown sugar, 1/4 lb. gum benzoin, and 2 OZ. Orris root. Add 1 gill of brandy and any sort of fragrant flowers, such as Orange and Lemon flowers, Lavender and lemon-scented Verbena leaves and any other sweet-scented flowers. They should be perfectly dry when added. The mixture must be occasionally stirred and kept in close-covered jars, the covers to be raised only when the perfume is desired in the room. If after a time the mixture seems to dry, moisten with brandy only, as essences too soon lose their quality and injure the perfume.

This mixture is said to retain its fragrance for fifty years.

II. Prepare 2 pecks of dry Rose leaves and buds, 1 handful each of Orange flowers, Violets and

Jessamine, 1 OZ. sliced Orris root and Cinnamon, 1/4 OZ. Musk, 1/4 lb. sliced Angelica root, 1/4 lb. of red part of Cloves (carnations), 2 handfuls of Lavender flowers, Heliotrope and Mignonette, 1 handful each of Rosemary flowers, Bay and Laurel leaves, 3 sweet Oranges stuck full of cloves and dried in the oven and then powdered in a mortar, 1/2 handful of Marjoram, 2 handfuls of Balm of Gilead dried, 1 handful each of Bergamot, Balm, Pineapple and Peppermint leaves. Mix well together and put in a large china jar; sprinkle salt between the layers, add a small bottle of extract of New-Mown Hay and moisten with brandy. If the mixture becomes too dry, stir it, adding liquid or additional leaves when wanted for use. If the jar is tightly corked, the preparation will keep and be fragrant for many years.

III. Take the rind of 2 Lemons, cut thin, 1 lb. Bay salt, 1 OZ. of powdered Orris root, 1 OZ. Gum Benzoin, 1 OZ. Cinnamon, 1/2 OZ. Cloves, 1 OZ. Nutmegs, 1 grain Musk, 12 Bay leaves, a few Sage leaves, Rosemary and Lavender, cut small, 1 OZ. Lavender Water, 1 OZ. Eau-de-Cologne, 1 OZ. Bergamot oil. Mix all together in a pan and add sweet flowers in their natural state as they come into blossom, stir up frequently - at least once a day. It must be put into a covered stone pot, with a wooden spoon to stir it with. At the end of two or three months, this will be a sweet-scented mass ready to fill any number of Japanese rose jars. From time to time throw in fresh Rose petals.

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Lady Rosalind Northcote in *The Book of Herbs* gives:

### **I. A Devonshire Recipe**

'Gather flowers in the morning when dry and lay them in the sun till the evening:

Roses, Orange flowers, Jasmine, Lavender.

In smaller quantities: Thyme, Sage, Marjoram, Bay.

'Put them into an earthen wide jar or hand basin in layers. Add the following ingredients:

6 lb. Bay Salt

4 OZ. Yellow Sandal Wood

4 OZ. Acorus Calamus Root

4 OZ. Cassia Buds

2 OZ. Cinnamon

2 OZ. Cloves

4 OZ. Gum Benzoin

1 OZ. Storax Calamite

1 OZ. Otto of Rose

1 drachm Musk

1/2 OZ. Powdered Cardamine Seeds.

'Place the rose leaves, etc., in layers in the jar. Sprinkle the Bay salt and other ingredients on each layer, press it tightly down and keep for two or three months before taking it out.'

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### **II. Sweet-Jar**

1/2 lb. Bay salt, 1/4 lb. saltpetre and common salt, all to be bruised and put on six baskets of rose-leaves, 24 bay leaves torn to bits, a handful of sweet myrtle leaves, 6 handfuls of lavender blossom, a handful of orange or syringa blossoms, the same of sweet violets and the same of the red of clove carnations. After having well stirred every day for a week add 1/2 OZ. cloves, 4 OZ. orris root, 1/2 OZ. cinnamon and 2 nutmegs, all pounded; put on the roses, kept well covered up in a china jar and stirred



sometimes.

'Put alternate layers of rose leaves and Bay salt in an earthen pot. Press down with a plate and pour off the liquor that will be produced, every day for six weeks, taking care to press as dry as possible. Break up the mass and add the following ingredients well pounded and mixed together: Nutmeg, 1/4 OZ.; cloves, mace, cinnamon, gum benzoin, orrisroot (sliced) 1 OZ. each. Mix well with a wooden spoon. The rose leaves should be gathered on a dry, sunny afternoon, and the Bay salt roughly crushed before using. Orris root may be replaced With advantage by good violet powder.'

Besides the ingredients mentioned in these various recipes, the following may also be added: *leaves* of Basil, Bergamot, Mint, Lad's Love or Southernwood, Santolina, Costmary, Bog Myrtle, Anise and Sweet Woodruff and Cowslip and Agrimony *flowers*. The dried petals of Cornflower, Borage, Broom, Hollyhock and Marigold and any other bright petals that, though scentless, keep their colour when dried, are also often added to give a brighter and more attractive appearance to the mixture.

Sweet oils and essences played an important part in the recipes of a hundred years ago, as, for example, the following formula:

Four grains of Musk, 1 OZ. of Pimento, crushed Cloves and powdered gum Benzoin, 80 drops of oil of Cassia, 6 drops of Otto of Roses, 150 drops of essence of Bergamot and the same quantity of oil of Lavender, the whole being thoroughly worked in and mixed with whatever petals are handy.

Another recipe (which was used by an oldfashioned Scottish chemist for some fifty years) was purely a liquid one, the essences consisting of Musk, Vanilla, Sandalwood, Patchouli, Verbena, Neroli and Otto of Roses. The mixture was bottled and sold under the all-bracing and appropriate title, 'A' the floors o' th' gairden in a wee bit bottle.'

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### **Recipe for Crystallized Roses**

Choose a dry day for gathering the roses and wait until the dew evaporates, so that the petals are dry. Before gathering the roses, dissolve 2 OZ. of gum-arabic in 1/2 pint of water. Separate the petals and spread them on dishes. Sprinkle them with the gumarabic solution, using as many petals as the solution will cover. Spread them on sheets of white paper and sprinkle with castor sugar, then let them dry for 24 hours. Put 1 lb. of sugar (loaf) and 1/2 pint of cold water into a pan, stir until the sugar has melted, then boil fast to 250 degrees F., or to the thread degree. This is ascertained by dipping a stick into cold water, then into the syrup and back into the water. Pinch the syrup adhering to the stick between the thumb and finger and draw them apart, when a thread should be formed. Keep the syrup well skimmed. Put the rosepetals into shallow dishes and pour the syrup over. Leave them to soak for 24 hours, then spread them on wire trays and dry in a cool oven with the door ajar. The syrup should be coloured with cochineal or carmine, in order to give more colour to the rose-petals.

Rose-petals have also been employed to flavour butter, for which the following recipe may be of interest:

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### **Rose-Petal Sandwiches**

Put a layer of Red Rose-petals in the bottom of a jar or covered dish, put in 4 OZ. of fresh butter wrapped in waxed paper. Cover with a thick layer of rose-petals. Cover closely and leave in a cool place overnight. The more fragrant the roses, the finer the flavour imparted. Cut bread in thin strips or circles, spread each with the perfumed butter and place several petals from fresh Red Roses between the slices, allowing edges to show. Violets or Clover blossoms may be used in place of Roses.

