



Plants & Gardening

The people's choice

Rose

Rosa spp.

Why it was chosen

Many consider the rose to be the ultimate flower – the perfect combination of form and fragrance. There are more than 1000 varieties to choose from today.

What it is

Fossilised rose leaves 35000 years old have been found in North America.

Cultivated roses were probably introduced to Britain by the Romans. However, roses were popularised by crusaders returning from the Middle East in the 12th and 13th centuries, but their use was originally medicinal rather than decorative.

Roses belong to the *Rosaceae* family which includes many fruiting trees such as apple, pear, cherry, plum, peach and almond, as well as strawberries and blackberries.

Where it grows

Wild roses grow throughout the Northern Hemisphere but there are no varieties native to the Southern Hemisphere. China has the greatest number of wild roses – over 100 varieties. The dog rose, *Rosa canina*, is Britain's best known native rose, but there are 14 other varieties.

Did you know?

The oldest known depiction of a rose in Western Art is in the palace of Knossos in Crete, around 4000 years ago. Modern roses all arise from centuries of breeding between such wild roses.

What the scientists say

The colour of roses is important for horticulture, and scientists are working to understand exactly how and when the different pigments in the petals are made. They are also studying the biochemical pathways that generate the complex and desirable scents that roses and other flowers produce.