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Rosa gallica var. *officinalis*

[Synonyms : *Rosa gallica* var. *plena*, *Rosa officinalis*, *Rosa provincialis*]

APOTHECARY'S ROSE is a cultivated variety of prickly deciduous shrub. It has small semi-double, strongly scented, deep pink flowers.

It is also known as *Apothekerrose* (German), Crimson damask rose, Damask rose, Double French rose, *Essigrose* (German), French rose, Lancaster rose, Officinal rose, Old red damask, Provins rose, Red rose of Lancaster, and Rose of Provins; and in flower language is said to be a symbol of marriage, and union.

Dried, pulverized petals yield a fragrant powder.

Gallica means 'of or from France'. *Officinalis* means 'of the shop (usually the apothecary's or herbalist's)'. Certain plants used for medicinal purposes, whether of actual or legendary value, were kept readily available and acquired this name.

Apothecary's rose for many is probably the oldest existing cultivated form of French rose (*Rosa gallica*). It is reputed to have been brought to France from Damascus by Count Thibault IV (1201-1253) to his estates around Provins in the early 1240s.

It is depicted in a famous altarpiece in Ghent Cathedral which is believed to have been painted in about 1430.

In England the Houses of Lancaster and York fought each other during the Wars of the Roses (1455-1485) and both adopted a rose as their emblem. The House of Lancaster chose the deep pink apothecary's rose and the House of York the white rose of York (*Rosa x alba*).

During this species' early years in France it was appreciated that its petals retain and even increase their colour and fragrance when dried (and subsequently powdered). As a result in the Provins region (in France) the herbalists built up a renowned industry from the 13th-19th Centuries using the flower for confectionery, preserves and medicines.

Today apothecary's rose can be an ingredient in aromatherapy oils.

It is the birthday flower for 5th June.