

Rosa laevigata

[Synonyms : *Rosa amygdalifolia*, *Rosa argyi*, *Rosa camellia*, *Rosa cherokeeensis*, *Rosa cucumerina*, *Rosa hystrix*, *Rosa laevigata* var. *kaiscianensis*, *Rosa nivea*, *Rosa sinica*, *Rosa ternata*, *Rosa triphylla*]

CHEROKEE ROSE is a rambling, prickly semi-evergreen shrub. Native to Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan and southern China, it has slightly fragrant, white-petalled (occasionally rose-coloured) flowers with many yellow stamens.

It is also known as Camellia rose, *Chinesische Hagebutten* (German), *Naniwa-ibara* (Japanese), and White Cherokee rose.

Laevigata is derived from Latin *levis* (smooth) meaning ‘smooth or polished’ with reference to the leaves.

The common name Cherokee rose actually came about because of the North American Indian Cherokee tribe’s love for this species.

Notwithstanding its newness to the North American Continent it still attracted American Indian legend which must be a fair indication of its standing. The Indians tell how a young girl was in danger when another tribe hostile to her own threatened to capture her village. The magic Nunshi then transformed her into the prickly-stemmed Cherokee rose to protect her from her aggressors.

François André Michaux (1770-1855), son of the famous French botanist, discovered the rose in south-west Arkansas in 1803 after his father had left to return to France (and the same year his father died). [There seems to be much debate on how and when the rose arrived on the North American Continent. Some authorities subscribe to the view that it reached there direct from the Far East before the Ice Age. Others believe that it was introduced to North America far later from the opposite direction ie. via Europe. Certainly authorities say that it was well-established by the late 18th Century in either case.]

It is claimed that Cherokee rose was first described by an English naturalist and plant collector, Leonard Plukenet (1642-1706) in 1696. One of the first specimens of this rose to have reached Europe in the early 18th Century was sent from the East India Company’s China station.

The state of Georgia in the United States adopted the Cherokee rose as a state flower in 1916. The Cherokee rose has been used medicinally.