

*Rosa x canina*

[Synonyms : *Rosa caniniformis*, *Rosa ciliato-sepala*, *Rosa plumbea*, *Rosa plumbeiformis*]

**DOG-ROSE** is a climbing or trailing, prickly deciduous shrub. Native to western Asia, Europe and North Africa, it has small slightly scented, white or pale pink flowers with many yellow stamens.

It is also known as Bird briar, Bramble briar, Brere rose, Briar rose, Brier rose, Brimble, Buck breer, Cag whin, Canker blooms, Canker rose, Cat-rose, Choop-rose, Cock-bramble, Common briar, Cynosbato, *Divoká růže* (Czech), Dogberry, Dog briar, Doghip, Dog thorn, *Églantine* (French), Eglantine gall, English briar, Ewemack, *Heckenrose* (German), Hedge peak, Hep tree, Hip fruit, Hip rose, Hip tree, Hogseed, *Hondsroos* (Dutch), Hop fruit, Horse-bramble, Humack, *Hundsrose* (German), Lawyers, *Măceș* (Rumanian), *Nyponros* (Swedish), Pig rose, *Planá růže* (Czech), *Rhosyn Coch Gwyllt* (Welsh), Roe-briar, *Rose de cat* (Channel Islander-Guernsey), Rosehips, *Rose sauvage* (Channel Islander-Jersey Norman-French), *Rosier de chien* (French), *Rozo hunda* (Esperanto), *Ruža šípová* (Slovak), *Růže šípková* (Czech), *Šípek* (Czech), Soldiers, *Stenros* (Swedish), Sweetbriar, Sweet brier, *Törnros* (Swedish), *Trnová růže* (Czech), *Vildros* (Swedish), *Villiruusu* (Finnish), Wild briar, Wild brier, Wild rose, Witches' brier, and *Zarza escarambujera* (Spanish); and in flower language is said to be a symbol of pleasure and pain.

*Canina* is Latin (of a dog, grey, grizzled) meaning 'of dogs' with reference possibly to implied 'commonness or worthlessness'.

Some authorities believe that the ancient Greeks named the dog-rose *cynorhodon* because they used the root to cure rabies (mad dog disease) – and as the Romans also subscribed to this it was known as *Rosa canina*. Others suggest that the botanical name emerged for the same reason but much later on in the Middle Ages. Yet others pose the view that the English name is a corruption of 'Dag rose' ('dag' meaning 'dagger' as the wood was used for making dagger handles) and still others have suggested that like the heath dog-violet (*Viola canina*), the dog-rose is virtually scentless – or perhaps that the prickles could be reminiscent of dogs' teeth.

The glossy orange-scarlet hips have been used to make preserves and they have been fermented for wine, the former particularly in Germany and the latter especially in Sweden and Russia. The dried leaves have offered a pleasant alternative for tea.

For Russia and several middle-European countries the dog-rose has been the subject for the designs of some of their postage stamps.

The famous English playwright and poet, William Shakespeare (1564-1616) refers to the dog-rose as 'eglantine' in two of his plays. It is from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* that the often quoted words of Oberon come

I know a bank where the wild thyme blows,  
Where oxlips, and the nodding violet grows;  
Quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine,  
With sweet musk-roses and with eglantine.

The dog-rose has acquired its own share of superstitions. In western Europe the odd spray of blossom in the Autumn presaged the imminence of plague. If the plant touched the ears

painful earache would follow, and blindness would strike if it was too near the eyes during the month of June. Its unlucky undertones even persisted into the 19<sup>th</sup> Century when it was thought by some that plants made within the vicinity of the plant were bound to go astray.

Dog-rose is an emblem of the Scottish Rose clan.

It is thought highly likely that the dog-rose was one of about a dozen species that had been introduced to North America (Virginia particularly) with the early settlers by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. In the much admired Governor's Palace Gardens at Williamsburg, Virginia this rose is one of the foreign species in evidence there today.

Despite various superstitions, herbalists used to recommend dog-rose hips for treating diarrhoea, dysentery (helping to allay thirst), coughs, consumption, and kidney and gall bladder complaints. Although the diuretic properties in the seeds were also appreciated by apothecaries the dog-rose only began to achieve relative medicinal importance during the Second World War when it was discovered to be a very rich source of Vitamin C. Rose hip syrup made with dog-rose is so rich in fact that it has 4 times as much Vitamin C as black currant juice (*Ribes nigrum*) and 20 times as much as orange juice (*Citrus sinensis*). In addition in the early 21<sup>st</sup> Century trials evaluating painkilling properties of dogwood rosehip extract for sufferers of osteoarthritis in knees or hips have shown a significant reduction in the pain experienced – sufficient to justify looking at the painkilling properties of other rose species.