

WILD ROSES

The Myths

Just when you thought you'd seen the last of the gorgeous, clear rose-pink blooms this beauty bestows, another round of flowers appears. Blooms emerge from small, single, pointed buds that are as elegant as the fully open roses are lush. Perfect for cut-flower arrangements that can be enjoyed as a tableside accent or given as a gift to your favorite relative or cherished friend.

The True "Wild" Roses



The botanical term for wild rose is "species rose", which means just what it says — a species that occurs naturally, with no help from man — a true "wildflower." There are over 100 of these worldwide, some native to North America, many from the Orient and Europe. These true wild roses are all single with exactly five petals — never more, and almost all of them are pink, with a few whites and reds, and even fewer that range toward yellow. (By the way, there are now over 20,000 hybrids, with about 200 new ones every year.)

North American Native Roses

Two of the most widespread species roses you may see are *Rosa carolina*, or the Carolina Rose, common in thickets, and *Rosa palustris*, commonly called "Swamp Rose", since it grows in wet ground. Both are rather small, scrambling shrubs with spectacular, 2" wide-open single blooms with five bright pink petals. And both are native to a huge area from the entire Atlantic seaboard all the way west to Nebraska.

Further west, *Rosa blanda* is the pink-fading-to-white-flowered climbing shrub usually called "Prairie Rose". It's native from Ontario down into Texas, and west to the Rockies.

From the Rockies through the Cascades, a very hardy favorite is *Rosa woodsii*, or "Wood's Wild Rose". Along the upper Pacific coast from Alaska down into California, a famous wild rose is *Rosa nutkana*, known as "The Nootka Rose." And of course, there is a *Rosa californica*, native west of the Sierra Nevada. All these westerners are pink. There are others, and every region has it's favorite.

Most all North American native roses look a lot like the large photo above, pink with exactly five petals. Most of the native rose plants are smallish shrubs, with canes no longer than three or four feet.

The Most Misused Common Names of All

If your Aunt Sarah, who knew her plants, told you that wild rose at the farm was a "Pasture Rose", that's fine, but don't expect anyone else to know what that means. Pasture Rose, Prairie Rose, Wild Rose, Dog Rose, Eglantine, Sweetbriar, and Scotch Briar are just a few of the very common names for wild roses that mean different things in different places. (Probably ten different species are called "Pasture Rose" in various parts of the country.)