Rosaceae

The Rose Family

Habitat: Plants of the rose family can be found worldwide- in fact there are almost 100 genera. According to the book *Botany in a Day* by Thomas J. Elpel, 50 genera of Rosaceae can be found in North America. Species of the rose family can be found in the wild and also found planted by people. In fact, many homestead sites in the United States have plants of the rose family (apples, plums, rose, etc.) that settlers would intentionally plant as food sources. Rosaceae plants grow in various types of soils from rocky, woodlands, riparian water banks to disturbed sites and cityscapes- species are adaptable and find ways to bring beauty to the landscape.

Identification: Members of the rose family have a key identification found amongst their flowers. They are known for having 5 sepals, 5 petals and numerous stamen. Flowers vary in color from white to yellow to pink to red (bred varieties can be found in purple, orange, or even green!). Rosaceae species have serrated leaves that are more or less oval-shaped. However, leaves can be simple or compound- yielding different number of leaflets. Fruits of this family also vary from fleshy edible fruits, stone fruits, achenes (dry seeds), capsules and dry seeds.

Food & Medicine: Rosaceae has three different subfamilies that contain different species that are commonly used as food and medicine.

The rosoideae subfamily contains plants that produce astringent leaves used often in herbal medicine. Lady’s Mantle, Thimbleberry & Raspberry leaves are important in women’s reproductive health. Rubus species fruits, rose hips and strawberry fruits are high in phytonutrients and provide sweet and sour flavors.

The dryoideae contains plants are great nitrogen fixers and also fodder for wild animals. No species of this subfamily are used for human food and medicine. The amygdaloideae subfamily contains the most amount of species that we used as food, medicine and even utilitarian purposes. Fruits of cherry, plum, peaches, apricots, nectarines, apple, service berry, hawthorn berry, aronia and osoberry provide an array of flavors from bitter to sweet to sour or astringent. These fruits help the digestive system and some are high in antioxidants– increasing our immune systems. While the fruits are moving, the leaves of many of these species are astringent and tightening, often bitter in taste. Many of these plants contain seeds or barks with high amounts of cyanide that can impact our blood and cells. Spiraea contains salicylates similar to willow. It is used to modulate inflammation and pain (especially associated with the joints).

Parts Used: Roots, leaves, flowers, fruits (branches-utilitarian)

Energetics: Cooling, drying or moistening

Tastes: Astringent (roots, leaves, some flowers), Sweet, Bitter

Common Plants: This list contains common names of some of the edible and medicinal plants of this family. Refer to Botany in a Day for further information.

Cherry, plums, nectarine, peaches

Rose

Apple

Strawberry

Almonds

Lady’s mantle

*Rubus spp*. (raspberry, blackberry, thimbleberry, salmonberry)

Agrimony

Avens

Oceanspray

Meadowsweet

Osoberry

Serviceberry

Mountain Ash

Aronia

Hawthorn

Recipes

Hawthorn Decoction:

2 cups fresh or 1 cup dried hawthorn berries

4 cups water

**Directions**:

Bring water to a boil. Add hawthorn berries and reduce to simmer. Let simmer until water is reduced by half (about 25 minutes). If it’s not strong enough, use less water or infuse berries for longer.

Vital Vitamin Syrup:

1 cup fresh rosehips

1 cup fresh hawthorns

4 cups water

1 cup raw honey

**Directions:**

Add herbs and water to saucepan.

Bring to a boil and then reduce to a slow simmer until the liquid reduces to 2 cups (following decoction recipe above). Strain off the fruits and return liquid to the saucepan. Add half the amount of liquid measurement in honey (this should be about 1 cup). Turn the heat back on low and stir in honey to combine. Store syrup in jar in refrigerator. Keeps up to 2 months without contamination. Use as morning vitamin tonic, add to breakfast meals or even pour over ice cream!

Lady Parts Tea:

*This is a combination that tonifies the uterus, reduces heavy bleeding.*

Equal parts, dried/cut/sifted:

Lady’s Mantle leaf

Raspberry leaf or Thimbleberry leaf

Rose petals or buds

**Directions:**

Weigh herbs separately and combine in a bowl. Store in jar or airtight sealed bag.

To make tea, boil water. Pour boiled water over herbs and let steep for 15-20 minutes.

Hedgerow Jelly

2 lb. fresh rosehips, hawthorn berries, crabapples, aronia berries, plums

1 ¼ cup water

1 cup sugar (or more to taste)

**Directions:**

Remove stems, seeds and sepals from ends of fruits.

Rinse quickly. Bring water and rosehips to a boil, and then simmer, keeping covered until fruit becomes tender (about 30 minutes or so). Strain the fruit through a sieve and weigh the pulp. Add 1 cup of sugar for every pound of pulp. Bring the sugared pulp to a boil, stirring continuously, and boil for 10 minutes.

Pour into hot jars, cool and seal.

Rose Rubus Oxymel:

1 part fresh thimble berries

1 part fresh salmon berries

1 part fresh rose buds/petals

Apple cider vinegar

Raw honey

**Directions**:

Chop/mash/cut herbs and fill quart jar until its ¾ full.

Pour vinegar to cover herbs until the jar is about half full. Then use honey to fill the rest of jar up to brim.

Cover with plastic or BPA free lid so that the vinegar will not corrode the metal jar lid. Label and place in room temperature, out of light. Shake/stir daily for 2 weeks. Let infuse for a total of 4-6 weeks (until flavor is desired). Strain herbs from honey-vinegar infusion (AKA oxymel) and pour into a jar. Keep in cool place for up to 1 year. Enjoy as daily tonic or use as a salad dressing or a fun addition to bubbly water.

Rose Honey:

Fresh Rose Petals or Buds

Honey to fill jar

**Directions**:

Fill a widemouthed glass jar half full of fresh rose. Add enough honey to the jar to cover the herbs, stirring to release air bubbles. Place the jar in a warm spot.

When the honey tastes and smells strongly of rose, it's finished. You can leave the rose petals/buds in the honey, or strain them out. Bottle and store in a cool pantry.

Meadowsweet Tincture:

Meadowsweet Flowers: fresh or dried

Mason jar

Vodka (ideally 50% ABV)

**Directions**:

Chop flowers and put in mason jar. Once filled to top brim, cover with vodka. Let infuse for 6-8 weeks.

Strain and store in amber tincture jar.

*Dosage*: 30-60 drops as needed for pain, inflammation, headaches and stomachaches.