

## Rosa Damascena & Woodsii.

By June Pepper



### Why Rose:

Rose can be found in many regions of the world, and it grows wild in Flagstaff. I have been drawn to roses for their beauty and have fond memories of planting and growing wild roses, picking wild roses in the woods with my friends (the above picture on the right is my friend picking roses by one of our friends' houses just outside of town), selling cultivated roses at queer dance party fundraisers for the community bail/bond fund (the above picture on the left is of someone dancing with a rose at one of these parties), etc. I first became interested in roses as medicine when I learned about their use as nervines for this class. Knowing about the wide availability of wild rose in this region, and being interested in accessible mental health care, led to me making a rose tincture this Spring, which I found it to be incredibly healing for me and my family.

### Personal Experience:

This summer I provided hospice for my father, and rose supported me in powerful ways. Tensions were running high in my family as we navigated feeling extremely helpless, sleep-deprived, overwhelmed, grief-stricken, and afraid in the face of my father's coming death. Though it was a traumatic experience, rose helped me be more present with the beauty of it. Whenever I took the rose tincture, I felt a sense of calm and compassion that allowed me to be more present with all that my family was experiencing, and I was able to be grounded in a loving, heart centered place. This allowed me to stay patient and not react when family members were taking out their stress on one another. It allowed me to tap into love and the bravery to be with the suffering I was witnessing and experiencing.

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In one of the books I had read about being with dying, the author used the refrain “strong back, soft front” to explain a compassionate disposition for being present with those who are dying (Halifax). It means being able to hold your boundaries (strong back) while acting from an open hearted, loving and understanding space (a soft front), which requires strength and courage (strong back) (Halifax). I feel that this refrain also explains the spiritual and emotional effects of rose that I experienced.

During the weeks that I took care of my father and in those weeks that followed his passing, I took a half dropper full of rose many times throughout each day. I continue to take it on a regular basis.

I also used a rose-water mist to cool my father down when he was feverish and to clean his skin, and this felt ceremonial as well as therapeutic aromatically for us who were caregiving for him.

Energetically, I was less aware of rose’s cooling and astringent nature in its tincture form, but was aware of its aromatic and spiritual effects immediately.

I have also made “full moon rose bourbon honey” and given it as gifts to friends, telling them to turn the honey upside down once a day for a moon cycle and watch the flowers slowly float through the honey to the top of the jar while meditating/giving some love to the rose honey and themselves — with the idea that by the next full moon, their honey will be infused with rose medicine and their loving intentions, ready to strain and enjoy in teas, on toast, etc.

The process of making rose medicine feels like medicine itself to me. Rose buds are extremely beautiful and aromatic, and become more aromatic in tincturing them.

I have learned that I sometimes have an allergic reaction to rose in essential oil form - so I prefer teas, tinctures, and infusions.

I have also smoked rose in herbal cigarettes with my family after my father’s celebration of life - and felt its relaxing effects immediately. However, because I have asthma, I prefer the tincture form for regular use and smoking for ceremonial, special, or occasional use.

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### Genus species (Family):

*Rosa* ssp. (Rosaceae)

*Rosa Damascena* (Rosaceae)

*Rosa Woodsii* (Rosaceae)

### Common Names:

Damascena - Damask Rose

Woodsii - Woods rose, wild rose

### Plant Part That is Harvested or

**Wildcrafted:** Buds, Flowers, Leaves, Hips

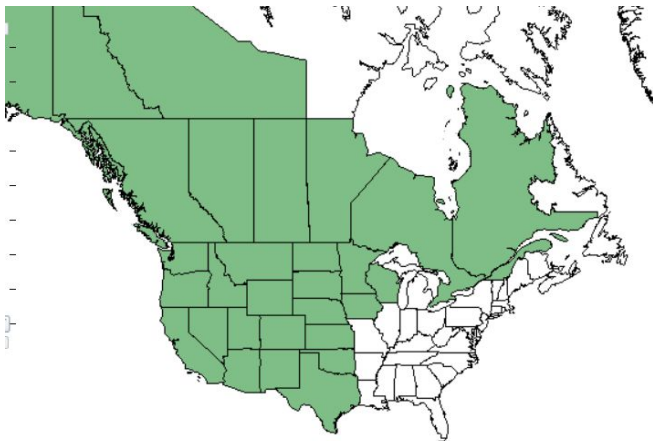
### General & specific environmental areas where found:

*Rosa Damascena*: Cultivated, farms, lawns

*Rosa Woodsii* or Wood/wild rose: Disturbed soil, forests, field edges, yards, trails (see map below, on left)

**Best Season to Harvest:** Wood/wild rose flowers should be harvested in late May or early June; hips can be harvested after the first frost in the fall (Masek). Leaves can be collected any time before the first frost, some collect the leaves and stem with the flowers and use in medicine making unless making a honey (Alicandro-Mace).

Be sure to get organic roses if buying cultivated roses. Don't use roses from commercial floral shops as pesticides are used heavily in the rose (and flower) industry.



**Best Ways to Prepare:** Tincture, Infusion, Honey, Powder (ayurvedic ingredient in Adaptogenic "Bliss Milk", can also be sprinkled on food, herbal honey coconut balls, etc (Masek)), Cordial, Vinegar, Herbal Cigarettes, Infused Oil, Essential Oil, Hydrosol, Salve, Cream, Liniment, Poultice, Compress, Flower Essence, Hand/ Foot Bath, Sitz Bath, Spiritual Bathing, Vaginal Steam (Alicandro-Mace)

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**Energetics:** Cooling and drying, but also helps retain moisture in skin products; contracting (Alicandro-Mace)

**Taste:** sweet, astringent (some also say it is bitter and sour)

### Herbal Actions

#### *Flowers & Leaves -*

- Vulnerary
- relaxant nervine,
- hemostatic/styptic,
- cardiovascular tonic,
- blood tonic (esp hips),
- liver relaxant,
- aphrodisiac,
- blood-mover,
- shen tonic,
- energetic heart medicine,
- gentle astringent/mucous membrane tonic,
- aromatic nervine,
- antispasmodic,
- anti-scorbutic,
- Anti-microbial (especially topically),
- nutritive,
- anti-inflammatory,
- antioxidant



#### *Hips -*

- blood tonic,
- astringent,
- vulnerary,
- immune system tonic (high in vitamin C),
- connective tissue tonic,
- anti-edemic,
- anti-microbial

(Elizabeth, Alicandro-Mace)



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### Therapeutic Uses

**Energetic Heart Medicine, Nervine** - treats anxiety, depression, grief, loss, heart-ache, trauma/ptsd, used in sexual assault first aid, promotes sattvic (spiritual, calm) mind

Roses have long been associated with love and romance. Rose is widely recognized by various traditions of herbal medicine as energetic heart medicine, good for all matters of heart-ache, grief, and trauma.

In ayurvedic medicine, rose is recognized for its ability to help harmonize the *Sadhaka Pitta*, which is a subdosha “that governs the emotions and their effect on the heart” (Schaeffer). Rose is considered in ayurveda to be a sattvic, which encourages a spiritual, calm, meditative mind (Masek). It is considered to be balancing for all three of the doshas.

The Perso-Arabic tradition of Unani medicine places the rose in its “exhilarant” heart herb category, which allow the spiritual heart feel joy (Green).

In Chinese medicine, rose is considered to be a shen tonic. Shen is considered to be the spirit gate, which cultivates wisdom, patience and compassion towards others (Masek). *“Shen provides the ability to transform difficult life events into positive or learning experiences. It gives us the will to live through illness or difficult times. Shen helps us be aware of the interconnectedness of all things.”* (Masek) The strength of Shen is a kind of soft wisdom in orientation towards the world. Disturbed shen manifests in fear, terror, nightmares, depression, and anxiety.

Herbalists of various traditions believe that rose thorns energetically serve to strengthen healthy boundaries and discernment, while also promoting softness (Hill, Green). Amber Magnolia Hill states: *“Of all the many ways [rose] brings healing one of the most important is by reminding us that softness and strength can coexist, and in fact, they must coexist. Power without softness and vulnerability is not real strength.... And likewise, softness without an underlying structure of strength and sureness of self and integrity is bound to collapse in on itself, crushed under the weight of other people's demands and expectations.”*

Many Western herbalists believe rose protects the boundaries of the heart while allowing one to feel more deeply, and to instill a sense of calm and safety, so that healing from unresolved trauma can take place. It is thus understood by some to be an empowering medicine for those working through trauma (Rissen-Rosenfeld, Rae). It is often included in formulas for PTSD and first aid for sexual assault (Rae), grief, heart-ache, and loss (McQuade Crawford), as well as in nervine formulas for disturbed shen, fear, anxiety, and depression (Masek, Elizabeth, Alicandro-Mace, Rissen-Rosenfeld). I have found rose to be useful when feelings are extremely raw and overwhelming, or when there is numbness from trauma. Rose may be a useful ally in healing work surrounding ancestral, and historical trauma. I believe rose is a helpful herb for caregivers and in particular those working in or dealing with death and bereavement while needing to take care both of themselves and others. Though discussing a different species of rose, the Rock Rose, Rissen-Rosenfeld explains: *“Rock Rose is for complete and utter terror and extreme fear caused by facing an unexpected or unfamiliar experience. Rock Rose enables a person to be calm, courageous and be able to look out for the well-being of others.”*

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### **Adaptogen, Reproductive, and Menopausal health**

A helpful ingredient in any adaptogen formula during any phase of life, many associate the smell of rose with their grandmothers. But rose *is* especially helpful during and after menopause, as vata (dryness and busy mind) increases with age (Masek). It is also useful in formulas for alleviating PMS symptoms brought on by repressed emotions such as irritability, frustration, anxiety, and depression (Masek).

### **“Beauty Medicine”**



Many are drawn to the rose simply because of its beauty and aroma. Amber Magnolia Hill refers to the simple “beauty medicine” of rose. In ayurvedic medicine, “bringing beauty in through all of our senses” is considered medicine which can have a positive effect on many systems in the body, mind, and our overall health (Masek). Western medicine calls this *psycho-neuro-immunology*, and also considers the interpretation of our sensory inputs to have a profound impact on our health (Masek). The beauty medicine of rose can be experienced through touch, smell, taste, and sight while growing roses, harvesting roses, picking wild roses, making rose medicine, sprinkling rose powder onto meals and deserts, giving a self-massage with rose infused oil, or making a rose petal bath.

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### Other Therapeutic Uses

Stagnant liver chi, vulnerary (wound healing, good for sunburn and rashes; for sunburn - rose vinegar with aloe and lavender works well), skin care, “eyes (wash) and upper respiratory (teas), diabetes or metabolic syndrome, lyme disease (connective tissue tonic), immune deficiency, cosmetics” (Elizabeth)

### My Favorite Preparations

#### Rose Tincture/Elixer (Mike Masek's Recipes)

Get Rosa damascena buds from MRHerbs. Fill the jar completely full of rose buds. Top of the jar with menstruum. Use 60~70% alcohol as the aromatic oils extract more readily with a higher % of alcohol. Wait 2 weeks (or more) and strain off. For an elixer, the menstruum ratio is: 75% vodka and 25% honey.

#### Full Moon Bourbon Rose Honey

Fill a jar halfway or more with dried rose buds from MRherbs. Mix bourbon with honey together (80% Honey, 20% Bourbon) and pour over the rose buds. Stir and make sure that there are no air bubbles before sealing. Flip jar once a day each day for a month (or a moon cycle), then strain (if you want, but you don't need to) and use in teas, drinks, deserts, on toast, etc. You can also heat it before processing, but I find it to be fine without this extra step if the honey hasn't crystallized.



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**Herbal Pairs, Combinations, & Formulas:** Combines well with Tulsi, Lemonbalm, Lavender, Lemonada, Cardamom, Hawthorn Berry, Motherwort, Blue Vervain, Pulsatilla (Masek).

### **Heart Tonic, for grief support and overall cardiovascular health (Masek)**

$\frac{1}{3}$  Rose

$\frac{1}{3}$  Motherwort

$\frac{1}{3}$  Hawthorn Berry

### **Feel More Deeply Formula (Rissen-Rosenfeld)**

$\frac{1}{3}$  Rose

$\frac{1}{3}$  Mimosa

$\frac{1}{3}$  Hawthorn

### **Rose and Lavender**

According to David Winston, Lavender works well for someone “fixated on a traumatic event” (Rae). It is also uplifting and in combination with rose this can help someone to feel strongly while not feeling triggered.

$\frac{3}{4}$  or more Rose

$\frac{1}{4}$  or less Lavender (a little lavender goes a long way)

### **Adding a Demulcent for Vata**

Licorice, Marshmallow, Honey, etc. I personally like to add licorice.

### **Daily Ashwaganda Rose Nervine Tonic**

$\frac{1}{4}$  Ashwaganda

$\frac{1}{4}$  Milky Oats

$\frac{1}{4}$  Rose

$\frac{1}{4}$  Licorice

### **Formula For Grounding During Acute Traumatic Situations**

$\frac{1}{3}$  Rose

$\frac{1}{3}$  Licorice

$\frac{1}{6}$  Motherwort

$\frac{1}{6}$  Blue Vervain

$\frac{1}{6}$  Kava or Pulsatilla

**Safety or Contra-Indications:** Be careful if you have rose allergies or sensitivities - rose causes me to feel itchy when I use it topically. To test, try on a small area first. Do not use rose petals in early pregnancy “because of blood-moving effects” (Alicandro-mace).

**Dosing Guidelines - Amount and Frequency:** Rose is a gentle medicine - you can use it liberally (unless using an essential oil - then dilute).



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- Map of Wild Rose Distribution. Plants.USDA.gov

### Baths & Steams

Rose Bath Salts

<https://www.easy-aromatherapy-recipes.com/bath-salts-recipe.html>

Soothing Rose and Oatmeal Bath

<https://www.diynatural.com/homemade-oatmeal-bath-recipe/>

Rose Milk Bath

<https://helloglow.co/diy-rose-milk-bath/>

Rose Milk Bath Bombs

<https://thenerdyfarmwife.com/natural-rose-milk-bath-bombs/>

Yoni (Vaginal) Steam with Rose

<https://www.ayurhealthtips.com/yonis-steam/>

### Additional Recipes

Rose Bliss Balls

<https://lotusbloomingherbs.com/rose-bliss-balls.html>

Rose, Pistachio Shortbread cookies

<https://wearenotmartha.com/rose-pistachio-shortbread-cookies/>

Rose, Strawberry, and Pistachio White Chocolate Bark with Pink Sea Salt -

<https://now-forager.com/rose-strawberry-pistachio-white-chocolate-bark-with-pink-sea-salt/>

Rose Petal Sugar

<https://www.callmecupcake.se/2018/06/rose-petal-sugar.html>

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Rose Cardamom Chia Pudding

<https://www.happietrio.com/2018/08/rose-cardamom-chia-pudding-recipe-chia.html>

Rose Latte with Coconut Butter

<https://veggiekinsblog.com/2018/03/21/caffeine-free-rose-latte/>

Ayurvedic Rose Drinks - Rose Lassi, Rose Milk, Rose Thirst Quencher

<http://ayurvedanextdoor.com/rose-petal-recipes/>