



Rose Ramblings

In celebration of the rose being chosen as the 2012 Herb of the Year™, HSA members were asked to send in their experiences with roses. Rose Ramblings is a compilation of contributions from HSA members.

Rita Salman (Southeast District, Baton Rouge Unit)

I lived in the Middle East for 23 years and “rosewater” is used in many ways.

One of my favorite ways:

When a guest enters your home they are offered a few drops of rosewater to cleanse their hands, refresh their face, and give an overall good fragrance to their entrance. The way to offer these “rosewater drops” depends on the wealth of the family. It can be from a plain decanter or a very elaborate, jeweled bottle, which only lets a few drops escape when turned upside down. It is a ceremony of the area that I really liked.

Look at the site below and scroll down a bit to where all the bottles are (right-hand side, ninth picture down); you can see one of the silver vessels that hold the rosewater to greet guests with.

http://www.iranreview.org/content/Documents/Festival_of_Rose_and_Rose_Water.htm

Rosewater also is used in many of the sweets served to guests. Sweets are not eaten at home on a regular basis. They are a special treat when one goes out with a friend or to a neighbor’s house for tea. One of the sweets is called *harissa*. (The attached recipe is from my friend.) I am making this cake to serve at our Wild Food Walk next week. I am also making it to serve at the Rose Meeting.

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Rosewater is always used in the rice with milk puddings for flavoring. Remember, vanilla is made with alcohol, a substance that is not consumed by Muslims. Therefore, rosewater is the flavor of choice in many Muslim countries.

**Harissa (Cream of Wheat Cake)
By Ma'Moun and Julie Sukkar**

Serves 15

- 3 cups quick cream of wheat
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 scant teaspoons baking soda
- 1 cup melted butter
- 2 cups plain yogurt
- ½ cup shredded coconut
- split almonds for garnish

Combine all ingredients in order given, except almonds. Mix well in large bowl. Pour into buttered 10"x 15" pan. Spread almonds evenly in a grid over the top. Bake at 350° for 35-45 minutes or until the top is golden brown. Remove from oven, cool slightly and cut into squares. Spoon cold syrup over *harissa* and let sit until syrup is absorbed.

Syrup (*attir*)

- 3 cups sugar
- 1 ½ cups water
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon orange blossom water or rosewater

Combine sugar, water and lemon juice in saucepan. Boil over medium heat for 15 minutes then stir in orange blossom water or rosewater. Remove from heat and refrigerate.

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All Natural Rose Petal Carpet Freshener:

Take fragrant rose petals and dry them. Grind petals and baking soda in a blender. Put mixture in a shaker container. Sprinkle on carpets, let sit a few hours, vacuum up. Use as a great, all natural freshener without bringing chemicals into your home.

Karen Mahshi (West District, Northern California Unit)

Before I go out to garden or when I'm going to do quilting, sewing or other handwork, I rub into my hands some udder cream/bag balm in which I have incorporated several drops of rose oil. It feels good and smells wonderful.

Henry Flowers (South Central District, Pioneer Unit)

I worked for many years at a nursery in Texas that specializes in old garden roses. With a wide variety of customers it was inevitable that there would be a few memorable events that happened. Two of these occurred because of being in Texas and due to the fact that many roses have French names. The first was when a customer came in and with a characteristic Texas twang asked for a tea rose named "Duchess day Braybunt"—think of a guy with a large cowboy hat and boots saying it. This was not so unusual, but the way the "bray" was drawn out was quite dramatic and amusing. The proper French pronunciation is a softer, more melodious "bRA-bahN" as the rose's name is 'Duchesse de Brabant' (which, by the way, is reported to have been Teddy Roosevelt's favorite rose and was commonly worn in the buttonhole of his lapel). I too am from Texas and thought at the time that only in Texas could such a lovely name be so butchered. Shortly after that incident, another customer came in looking for a "monster tiller." The assisting sales clerk didn't understand what the customer wanted and the customer was quite insistent that he had purchased one in the past and wanted more. Another sales clerk was asked for help and it dawned on her that the customer was looking for the

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tea rose ‘Monsieur Tillier’, a lovely, thorny, robust shrub. Suffice it to say, when back in the office after the event we all had a great chuckle while envisioning a giant garden tiller ripping through a beautiful garden in a cheap horror movie.

Another memorable event was when a clerk in rose selection queried a customer about the amount of sun a planting area would receive. The customer was quite adamant that since daylight savings time was in effect the area would get an extra hour of sunshine and all should be fine.

How many of you have flowers in your garden that evoke strong childhood memories? Perhaps potted geraniums in the windowsill of your grandmother’s kitchen or the apple blossoms in your aunt and uncle’s orchard? For me there are some specific flowers that I recall from my early childhood—the orange marigolds and purple petunias that my mother had planted near the front door (I can smell them now), the chrysanthemum from my great-grandfather’s funeral, and the intoxicating gardenias that we were allowed to smell and never touch. But one flower in particular evokes memories of one of my grandmother’s gardens. She was an avid gardener and had a huge vegetable garden behind her house that required the use of a tractor for plowing, sowing, and harvesting. I spent a lot of time in that garden. I loved seeing the plants growing and helping with the harvest. Grandmother was one of those very practical-minded gardeners who grew up during the depression, so it was rare for her to spend much time tending to any plant that would not provide something for the table. Yet, it is a rose that brings back the fondest memories of her garden. One whiff and I am taken back there as if it were just yesterday. Until I started to study roses in college I never knew the name of the rose in grandma’s garden, it was just called the “old red rose.” Its flowers were very full; rich carmine red in coloration, and it always seemed to have a bloom on it. Its scent was rich with tones of rose, pepper, and a sweet fruitiness that is hard to describe. I later came to know it by its “found rose” name of “Maggie.” Bill Welch, a Texas A&M University extension horticulturist and avid rose rustler, found it in the Louisiana garden of his wife’s grandmother and gave it that study name

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in her honor. There have been many possibilities for its true identity and it is believed that there is one as this rose is apparently widespread in its cultivation. As yet, nobody has come up with a conclusive identification and maybe they won't. For me it will always be the "old red rose" and its unique and lovely fragrance will always bring back fond memories every time I smell it in my garden. I hope you have a plant or two like that in your garden too!

Linda Lain (South Central District, South Texas Unit)

Rosa Linda's Pin

I was asked by a local Houston garden club to present a program on why the rose was selected as herb of the year for 2012. I used *The Society's Essential Guide to Rose, 2012 Herb of the Year* as my resource, found lots of information about roses from various works by HSA members, located some old photos from my files and cruised the Internet to find out how people outside The Society use roses for culinary and craft projects. I created a wonderful tri-fold display board, knowing that I was unable to use PowerPoint at the location of the program. I was fortunate to be able to gather a large supply of products made from roses for my display, along with many books showing the uses of roses. If you know me well, you know I am very visual and dress for the part. That meant that I wore a lovely silk rose pin, my rose bead earrings, and I found an old pin in my jewelry box.

I gave my program to the garden club. They were very engaged and interested to find that roses have so many uses other than just being a beautiful garden plants. I also treated them to a couple of recipes that I made with rosewater and rose syrup. They were really impressed! As the day came to an end and it was time to say goodbye, the hostess thanked me for a wonderful program, touched the old pin on my lapel

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and commented about it. Then it hit me! That pin belonged to Rosa Linda Swackhamer, my maternal great-grandmother. Did you notice her name? Rosa Linda! The Linda in my own name is after Grandma Swackhamer. She was called Rose by grandpa and her friends.

This is how a program given on the herb of the year was able to take me back to the memory of my precious great-grandmother, who probably had more influence on me than anyone else. She was a wonderful cook and a fabulous gardener. She never tired of being busy with some type of piecework, housework or gardening.



Rosa Linda Swackhamer
Photo courtesy Linda Lain



Photos courtesy of The Herb Society of America, Stockxchng, Dreamstime, Wikimedia Commons

