

Tale from the Garden!

Last week it was announced that a rose named after the Duke of Edinburgh has been produced with the same love & dedication he showed throughout a lifetime of public service. The majestic 'Duke's Rose' was gifted to the Queen at Windsor Castle gardens on her official birthday, to mark what would have been her husband's 100th birthday on Thursday 10th June.

David White, managing director of Harkness Roses (of Hitchin, Hertfordshire), said the plant is "easy to grow for any gardener". Combining knowledge & passion, its first seeds were planted almost nine years ago. Breeders combine pollen of one rose & seeds of another to create a fresh variety. Trials often last six or seven years but the Duke of Edinburgh Rose, which combines the red & white of royal roses, took almost nine to perfect. Mr White said it flowers in May & continues to the first frost. It is a rose which will enchant every rose-lover, with a truly amazing deep-pink almost light red colour dappled with white lines.

About 50,000 seeds will be produced annually & for every rose sold, Harkness will donate £2.50 to The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Living Legacy Fund.



Did you know ... The rose is June's official flower.

While roses have become a popular emblem in the Western world, and appear in many myths arising in the West, their origin actually begins in the East. First cultivated in Persia, these flowers were almost immediately given a mythology: one of the principal Hindu goddesses, Lakshmi, was said to have been created from 108 large and 1,008 small rose petals. The cultivation of roses spread across many continents, and in many cultures these flowers continued to be associated with the gods, and by extension, royalty.

Roses appear to have been in use from as early as the 8th century BC. In Homer's Iliad, rose oil was said to have been used to anoint the body of Hector, Prince of Troy, before burial. Likewise, in 5th century BC Egyptian tombs, rose balm anointed the dead, and dried petals were tucked inside the wrappings of mummified bodies. As well as simply improving the smell, flowers carried with them the association of life, growth, and rebirth. Roses were the flowers of the Egyptian goddess of love, Isis, so by sealing them in tombs, they also signified the love of mourners for their dead.

Just as the Egyptians had Isis, the Greek goddess of love, Aphrodite, was also associated with roses. At her birth, the sea foam Aphrodite sprung from turned to white roses, symbolising her purity; when she passionately pursued Adonis, she cut her feet on the rose's thorns and red roses were created to symbolise desire. In Roman myth, the goddess of flowers Flora created the rose from the body of a nymph; other gods contributed by adding life, nectar, scent, and fruit to Flora's flowers. The rose's thorns were arrows from Cupid's bow. Cupid was the son of Venus, the Roman goddess of love; the rose became more closely associated with Venus when, in return for keeping her lovers a secret, the flower was gifted to Harpocrates, god of silence.

As this story tells, the rose became a symbol for silence and secrets, as well as love. One Roman belief was that the flowers themselves stored secrets amidst their tightly wound petals. Roses were thus hung overhead during meetings, and the attendees were said to be *sub rosa* ('under the rose'): bound to an oath of silence as to all matters raised in that room. A relic of this belief can still be seen today, in the stucco roses which decorate the ceilings of banquet rooms in some grand residences.

The most traditional colours for roses, as depicted in art but also as recounted in lore, are white and red. These colours become a binary as the symbols of the York and Lancastrian families during the War of the Roses; in many stories, including a Jewish folktale, white roses represent innocence and honesty (like the faithful wife Zillah), while red roses represent fury and cruelty (like Hameul, who wrongly accuses his wife of adultery). Perhaps a more familiar story showing this binary is Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, where fearing the wrath of the Queen of Hearts, the gardeners paint the mistakenly-planted white roses red. The idea of originally-white flowers being turned red is a common thread in the folklore of roses. Rather than Aphrodite's blood, in early Christian belief it was the blood of Jesus that stained white roses and created red ones. The thorns of the plant allude to the crown of thorns placed upon him at his crucifixion; the five petals symbolise his five injuries. Other Christian stories tell of roses blushing at Eve's kiss, then growing thorns when she and Adam are expelled from Eden. These stories, while all ending with hope restored, contain an element of danger or suffering. Perhaps this is why, when mixing red and white one gets pink or 'rose', and why the phrase 'to look through rose-coloured glasses' conveys an optimism which overlooks the bad.

Roses also carry another binary: the beauty of their flowers versus the threat of their thorns. This binary was understood and became emblematic for medieval knights: during contests or warfare, knights would wear roses as a reminder that gentleness should accompany ferocity, and beauty would reward their prowess in combat. Like a rose's thorns protecting its flower, a knight would fight to defend their kingdom or their beloved. Other folktales also view the rose's thorns as a virtue: in Cherokee myth, a rose plant grew up and around Nunnshi to protect her from pursuers; in a Greek folktale, a prince uses roses taken from the bower of his sleeping princess to ward off his enemies. Another phrase could find its origin in this idea: to 'come up smelling of roses' means to rise from an unpleasant, 'prickly' situation to a more 'rosy' position.

Now to move away from tales of gods and rulers, and to turn to the more humble folk beliefs and uses of the rose.

The most obvious use for the rose is as a fragrance. Rose petals were boiled into an oil or balm as early as the 8th century BC, to perfume bodies both dead and alive. Roses were a favoured element of potpourri in Tudor England: it was kept in rooms and on the person in pomanders, to eliminate the bad smells they thought caused illnesses such as the plague. Rose vinegar has also been used to relieve headaches, and the scent of roses was believed to relieve melancholy. Burning rose-scented candles could fragrance a room, while a sachet of dried rose petals could freshen laundry. Some folk uses have, of course, died out as beliefs have been dropped, such as the use of wild rose roots to cure the bites of mad dogs, giving them the name 'dog roses'! The fruit of the dog rose (the rosehip), however, was often foraged during the Second World War as a good source of vitamin C, when citrus imports to England were less possible.

Today, we still value roses for their scents, but also their beauty. Roses have been bred into hundreds of thousands of cultivars, and can be bought in all the colours of the rainbow. Rose Colour Meanings - All roses symbolize God's love at work in the world, but different colours of roses also symbolize different spiritual concepts. White roses mean purity and holiness. Red roses mean passion and sacrifice. Yellow roses mean wisdom and joy. Pink roses mean gratitude and peace. Purple or lavender roses mean wonder, awe, and change for the better.

The modern hybrid called the English Rose was developed to give the flower even bigger blooms, and stronger fragrance. Roses feature frequently in art, and nowhere quite as effectively as in canal folk art. Painted in bright colours with only a few elegant brushstrokes, bunches of roses often adorn the sides of narrowboats. Yet despite the wealth of lore, from all over the world and across many centuries, concerning the rose, the origin of roses in canal folk art is relatively obscure. Perhaps it is just their universal beauty that makes them an enduring favourite.

So then, we can surmise that since ancient times, roses have symbolized God at work in whatever situation they appear. The intricate and elegant rose offers a glimpse of a masterful creator's active presence in creation. As this fragrant flower blooms, its buds gradually open to reveal blossoms with lovely layers, an illustration of how spiritual wisdom unfolds in people's lives.

But have you ever wondered why a rose, such a beautiful, highly regarded, symbolism of romantic love has to be carried & picked with caution considering the thorns that live on the stem of this beautiful flower? Perhaps it's a reminder that, regardless of how beautiful every rose is, there are thorns in life that we have to live with and overcome. Especially in these unprecedented times, no more can we look at this as thorns among roses – we must learn to praise God that there are roses among all the thorns.

Each rose is made of petals of comfort, grace, mercy, and kindness. God has a purpose for our thorns, it is up to us to handle them in a manner that will reveal just how, despite our thorns, a rose can bloom. Like the thorns on a rose, these thorns do not take away from the beauty of the rose, but it changes the way the rose is handled. It might feel like we've been given a single rose or that we've been delivered a bouquet, but when we deal with our issues, we realize the blessings God has provided for us. Sometimes the true miracle is in us. God might not change our outward situation, but our faith should tell us that he is using this situation to change the inner person. No matter the thorn, you can find a rose of comfort in the arms of God.

And here's a story to teach us one final lesson:

'A young, new preacher was walking with an older, more seasoned preacher in the garden one day and, feeling a bit insecure about what God had for him to do, he was inquiring of the older preacher. The older preacher walked up to a rosebush and handed the young preacher a rosebud and told him to open it without tearing off any petals.

The young preacher looked in disbelief at the older preacher and was trying to figure out what a rosebud could possibly have to do with his wanting to know the WILL OF GOD for his life and for his ministry. Because of his high respect for the older preacher, he proceeded to TRY to unfold the rose, while keeping every petal intact. It wasn't long before he realized how impossible a task it was.

Noticing the younger preacher's inability to unfold the rosebud while keeping it intact, the older preacher began to tell the following poem...'

It is only a tiny rosebud,
A flower of GOD's design;
But I cannot unfold the petals
With these clumsy hands of mine.

The secret of unfolding flowers
Is not known to such as I.
GOD opens this flower so sweetly,
When in my hands they fade and die.

If I cannot unfold a rosebud,
This flower of GOD's design,
Then how can I think I have wisdom
To unfold this life of mine?

So I'll trust in Him for His leading
Each moment of every day.
I will look to Him for His guidance
Each step of the pilgrim way.

The pathway that lies before me,
Only my heavenly Father knows.
I'll trust Him to unfold the moments,
Just as He unfolds the rose.