

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04538-4 - The Rose Book: A Practical Treatise on the Culture of the Rose

Shirley Hibberd

Excerpt

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Chapter I.

The Families of Wild Roses.

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THE ROSE BOOK.



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S it is better to do one thing well than two indifferently, I shall be quite content if I succeed in explaining to the satisfaction of all lovers of the rose, how to grow the flower to perfection. But whether I succeed or not in that attempt, I shall certainly not endeavour to treat of the botany of the rose, or of its history as a cultivated flower, in any except a most superficial and general way. And for a good reason. All that is known of the botany of the rose may be found in the books by those who need the information; and if there are differences of opinion as to the limitations of species and their several relationships, the better reason for avoiding the subject here, for we might soon exhaust the space needed for disquisitions on rose-culture, and the book would be not only dry but useless. As to the history of the rose, that has never yet been written, but some adventurous

spirit will, some day, seize upon the subject, and out of it evoke some new enchantments for the reading public. It is, indeed, a theme which might tempt any lover of roses given to literary adventures, but is too vast to permit of condensation into any introductory chapter of a work mainly devoted to a quite different purpose. I shall therefore only bring forward here such few botanical and historical matters as appear to be properly introductory to the chapters which follow on the cultivation of the rose, and I trust my brevity will be considered as evidence of prudence, and not of flippancy; or rather, will be accepted by the reader as a proof that I abhor the repetition of facts already elsewhere stated, because I have a story of another kind, and of my own, to tell. To treat intelligibly and practically of the rose, is for the present enough for my ambition, and I feel that—in this book at least—I can afford to treat both botany and history with comparative indifference.

The order ROSACEÆ is one of the most important in the vegetable kingdom, and in its economic adaptations ranks parallel with *Gramineæ*; for, from the roses we obtain the majority of edible fruits, and from the grasses most kinds of bread stuffs and food for cattle. Compare a wild rose with the flower of a strawberry, raspberry, apple, pear, or plum, and the general family likeness will be evident. Any good botanical work will give the characters of

this great order, and show how our various hardy fruits are related to the rose. Of the group of true roses, which has a place in the third sub-order, under the head of ROSÆ, there appear to be ten distinct sections: these, and a few of their species, we shall enumerate.

BOTANICAL GROUPS.

1. *Rosa ferax* is the type of a series known as *Feroces*, and so called on account of their fierce aspect when divested of their leaves, when they are seen to bristle from head to foot with a formidable array of spines. They are mostly Asiatic in origin, produce red flowers, and are deciduous. None of these are grown in our gardens.

2. *R. bracteata* (the parent of the Macartney rose) is the type of a group called *Bracteatae*. These roses are evergreen, the branches and fruit covered with woolly hairs; the leaves glossy. This is an interesting family to the florist, as it has furnished our gardens with some useful autumnal roses. *R. microphylla*, the "small-leaved rose," properly belongs to the section of *Bracteatae*, and will be considered in connection with it when we come to the floral groups.

3. *R. cinnamomea* is the type of a large, but not important section of English and American roses, to which it gives its name. *R. Carolina* and *R. Lindleyi* are in this section, which consists of species tolerably well known, but rarely cultivated.

4. *R. Alpina*, the origin of the Boursault roses, introduces us to an important section, called the *Pimpinellifoliae*. In this section we have, besides the Boursaults, *R. sulphurea*, the double yellow, one of the most celebrated of the roses which are difficult to bring into perfect bloom; also, *R. lutescens*, a Siberian rose, which produces pale yellow flowers and black hips. In this section occur also many British roses; as, for example, *R. Wilsoni*, *Sabini*, and *Spinossissima*, from the last of which has originated the group of garden varieties called Scotch roses.

5. *R. Damascena*, *R. Gallica*, and *R. centifolia*, constitute together the section of *Centifolium*, or, hundred-leaved roses; and this is the most important to the florist of all the botanical sections. From *R. Damascena*, the Damask rose, have proceeded by hybridization with other species and their varieties, the Hybrid Perpetual, Bourbon Perpetual, Damask, and Four Seasons roses. *R. Gallica* has had an important share in the parentage of Hybrid French, Hybrid Chinese, and Hybrid Bourbon roses; and from *R. centifolia*, the Provence and Moss roses have sprang. This is an important section, considered economically, for *R. Gallica* supplies the red rose-leaves of the shops. From *R. Damascena* and *R. centifolia* otto of roses is distilled, and the petals of *R. centifolia* are largely used in medicine.

6. *R. villosa*, a British rose, represents a section to which it gives its name. They are all formid-

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ably armed, and amongst them are some very interesting species. Here, for instance, we find *R. alba*, the type of a small group of garden roses, which produce handsome flowers, varying in colour from white to blush.

7. *R. rubiginosa*, the sweet-brier rose, is the type of an interesting section, called *Rubiginosæ*, in which are many European and British species of wild roses. Conspicuous among them is *R. lutea*, the varieties of which are known as Austrian briars, and greatly esteemed as free-blooming yellow roses.

8. *R. canina*, the dog rose, which abounds in the hedgerows of Britain, is the type of a section called *Caninæ*, the species of which are in no respect less important than those of *Centifolia* and *Damascena*. The dog rose, though valueless, if considered in respect of its flowers, plays a grand part in the rosery, in furnishing the roots and stems on which thousands of the choicest roses are nourished and displayed. All the Chinese, tea scented, fairy, and true Bourbon roses belong to this section, having descended from *R. indica*, the common China rose, and *R. semperflorens*, the ever-flowering rose. The Noisettes owe their parentage in part also to varieties of *R. indica* and *R. semperflorens*.

9. *R. Systyla*, a British species, is the type of the *Systylæ*, a section of sub-evergreen roses, which differ from *R. canina* in the coherence of the styles into the elongated column. In this section we find

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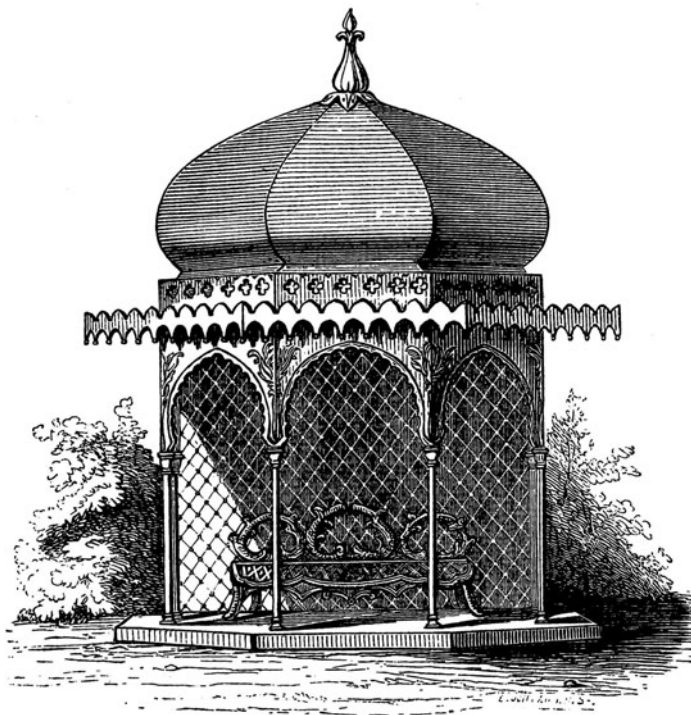
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the Ayrshire roses, *R. arvensis*, the evergreen roses, *R. sempervirens*, the *multiflora*, and the Prairie roses; the last being varieties of *R. rubifolia*.

10. *R. Banksiæ* is the type of a restricted but highly interesting section of climbing roses, natives of China; known in gardens as Banksian roses. They produce immense numbers of small flowers arranged in corymbs.



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Chapter III.

The Families of Cultivated Roses.

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