

# THE OUTSIDER

Illinois Extension Horticulture serving Henry, Mercer, Rock Island, and Stark



## A ROSE IS A ROSE?

A rose is a rose, or is it? This time of year, many people turn to long stem roses as a symbol of friendship and affection but is there more than meets the eye to these beauties? Horticulturally speaking, the rose family is vast, including many plants we would not immediately think of when someone mentions a rose. In honor of Valentine's Day and the close association the rose has to this day, let's explore this family a bit more.

## TRACKING A LINEAGE

In 1753, a Swedish naturalist named Carl Linnaeus developed a standardized naming system for natural elements. The classification of organisms is referred to as taxonomy and the binomial nomenclature system accepted as the universal name for a species also known as the scientific name. If illustrated, the classification system would resemble a flow chart, a kind of family tree for all living organisms. Classification begins with the largest group and becomes more selective, ultimately identifying a single species. The order from largest to smallest is kingdom, phylum, class, order, family, genus, and specific epithet. For simplicity, we use a binomial name as the scientific name including genus, and specific epithet. This is referred to as the scientific name. Common names are often used to identify plants but they are variable and may result in misidentification.



This is all important to understand because the common name Rose is often used to describe a shrub or climbing plant known for a profusion of often fragrant flowers, rose hip fruit and thorns on the stems. Or perhaps we think of bouquet of the long stem beauties, hoping our sweethearts will surprise us with a bouquet. These plants and blooms do hold the scientific name *Rose* spp. but what if we step up one more level of taxonomy to the *Rosacea* family?



## FAMILY: ROSACEA

The *Rosacea* Family is a diverse group of plants defined by their common characteristics of alternately arranged leaves that exhibit a stipule at the base of each leaf. Flowers are radially symmetric, often described as showy, and commonly host five sepals, five petals, and many stamens. Fruit or seeds produced by members of the *Rosacea* family are varied and include nuts, drupes, pome, capsules, and hips. Plants in this family include herbs, vines, shrubs, and trees. Thirty-three genera exist in this family. Let's explore a few to better appreciate the variety of the rose family.

### CALLING ALL THE COUSINS

#### ***Rosacea Rosa* spp.**

Undoubtedly the most well-known member of the *Rosacea* family, *Rosa* spp. is the shrub, climbing or standard that produces bold, often fragrant flowers on stems that host defensive prickles. These roses have been revered and cultivated for more than 2,000 years and fossil records indicate that the lineage of *Rosa* spp. is more than 30 million years old.



*Rosa* spp.

Containing over 150 species plus the popularity of rose cultivation, a classification system is used to help distinguish between the types of roses. Species roses are those found growing in the wild. Shrub roses are hybridized relatives of the species rose that have been bred and selected for desired characteristics. Old garden roses are rose cultivars that were identified prior to 1867. Cultivars that have been introduced since are considered modern roses. The American Rose Society is a great resource for more in-depth information including care, cultivars, and demonstration gardens.

#### ***Rosacea Potentilla* spp.**

Known commonly as Cinquefoil, many *Potentilla* species are native to the northern parts of the United States, Canada, Europe, and Asia making it a cold hardy species. Small, compound leaves of five leaflets give this species of shrubs a fine texture.



*Potentilla* spp.

#### ***Rosacea Sorbus* spp.**

A species that includes plants such as European Mountain Ash (*Sorbus aucuparia*) and Korean Mountain Ash (*Sorbus alnifolia*). These trees produce ornamental white flowers in the spring that develop into red, berry like pomes that are often consumed by wildlife. Native to northern regions of Europe and Asia, these species are well adapted to cold climates. These trees are not susceptible to Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) despite the common name. EAB target *Fraxinus* spp., not *Sorbus* spp.



*Sorbus* spp.

" There may be many flowers in ones's life...but only one rose."

— Unknown



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### **Rosacea Prunus spp.**

A genus of over 400 species, *Prunus* spp. includes well known members such as cherry, plum, peach, almond and apricots. Interbreeding can create challenges for identification and distinction between cultivars. Leaves are simple, alternate, and usually have obvious serrations. Fruit are single seed drupes, also known as stone fruit.



*Prunus* spp.

### **Rosacea Malus spp.**

*Malus* is the genus of apples and crabapples. Approximately thirty-five species exist and are native to Asia, Europe and North America. Woody shrubs or trees, crabapples are versatile and widely used in the landscape for ornamental value. Apple trees for fruit production are one of the most valuable tree crops.



*Malus* spp.

### **Rosacea Rubus spp.**

A prickly bunch of plants, *Rubus* spp. includes a variety of berries including blackberry and raspberry. Plants form arching structures or a vine like habit of woody plant material. Wild populations of this plant can be found throughout the Midwest. Flowers and fruit are usually produced on old growth. Varieties are available as spring bearing and "everbearing" types. Given the opportunity, *Rubus* spp. will spread to open areas with ease.



*Rubus* spp.

## **FUN FACT: SYMBOLOGY OF 12 ROSES**

A bouquet of a dozen roses has been widely accepted as a symbol of love and affection but why? According to a few well-known floral companies, the symbolism of a dozen red roses originates from the Victorian Era where the number twelve often represented completeness. The year has twelve months, the clock has twelve hours, the zodiac has twelve signs, measurement systems rely on twelve units and there are twelve apostles referenced in Christian religious text. The significance of the number twelve can be observed in many cultures, philosophical teachings, religious practices, and natural systems so it shouldn't seem so surprising that the symbology has been applied to the beauty of a dozen roses.

"We can complain because rose bushes have thorns or rejoice because thorn bushes have roses."  
— Abraham Lincoln

## **OUTSIDER ACTION**

Try these activities to be more of an Outsider

- Learn more about Apples, a rose family member: [go.illinois.edu/Apples101](http://go.illinois.edu/Apples101)
- Give the gift of flowers- roses or otherwise.

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