

Romancing THE ROSE

The traditional floral emblem of England, the summer rose is entwined in our country's romantic history and can be enjoyed for its beauty, fragrance and flavour

Enduring motifs

Soft, faded tea rose prints bring a pretty nostalgia and a cheery reminder of summer to interiors all year round. To keep the look informal, layer both ditsy and blowsier prints and add pale blue tones to the overall palette to avoid the look becoming too sugar sweet. Find similar fabrics as those seen here at Cath Kidston.



LEFT Keeping trim

Caring for roses ensures beautiful summer blooms. "The best time to prune roses is over Christmas up until the end of February. Pruning roses is easy; it is simply a matter of removing any old or weak stems to

encourage new growth and to then reduce the height of the plant by about half," says Michael Marriott of David Austin Roses.

BELOW Setting the scene Freshly cut roses need not be reserved for a bouquet. To make an

English Rose

al fresco celebration special, add a single overblown bloom set in a glass napkin ring flower holder, such as this one by Serax, to each setting. Here, the pale pink rose unites the vintage china, glasses, cutlery and napkin from The Dining Room Shop.



Roses are irrefutably the quintessential English flower. Entwined in our history, inspiring king and country, poets and playwrights, artists and artisans, the emblem of the rose, our national and most popular flower, is synonymous with beauty, romance and passion. Whether in love or war, it resonates throughout the country.

Revered for its beauty, delicious perfume and reputed medicinal qualities, the rose, one of the oldest plants known to mankind, has made England its home. Our English kings and lords proudly sported the emblem of the rose in battle, most famously throughout the medieval 'War of the Roses', the struggle for the throne of England that raged from 1455 until 1485; the white rose of York pitted against the red rose of the House of Lancaster.

However, the rose has also come to symbolise love and romance and our English literary heritage is peppered with references to the flower's gentle allure. There is no more apt an example than from that most quintessential of English playwrights, William Shakespeare:

*'What's in a name? That which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet'
(Romeo and Juliet, Act II, Scene ii)*

Notably, the Elizabethan Rose Theatre, on London's Bankside, was home to many of Shakespeare's first productions.

Ancient roses: Gallica, Damask, Alba and Centifolia, spilling with perfume and great beauty, were limited in variety and fleet of flower; one flush and they were gone. Hybridisation has revolutionised the cultivated rose, heralded by our Victorian plantsmen. Cross-breeding has facilitated thousands of new

or 'modern' roses, which have inherited the very best characteristics from their parents, with the benefit of repeat flowers and resistance to disease. Thus, we now have a plethora of modern rose cultivars in myriad colours and forms. Rosa 'Gertrude Jekyll', a heavily scented, modern shrub rose is a must-have for the cutting garden, with seemingly endless fragrant blooms. Rosas 'Graham Thomas', 'Princess Alexandra of Kent' and 'Munstead Wood' are other very popular 'English Roses', bred by David Austin.

The rose has inspired artists and interior designers, whose interpretations of the flower on fabrics, ceramics and furnishings enable us to envelop ourselves in the blooms throughout the year. From the nostalgic, rose prints by Kate Forman, the clean and fresh simplicity of Cabbages and Roses' signature designs, to the more opulent and colourful Designers Guild celebration of the rose, all invite relaxation indoors and out. ▶



Fragrant framing

Create an idyllic outdoor dining area by training a scented climbing rose over a pergola, or gazebo. To frame a sheltered seating area, the roses need to be tied in to a support structure. Feed the plants during spring and summer to help promote better blooms and prune after flowering, to remove dead wood and encourage renewal.

English Rose



LEFT Summer sipping

If you prefer to buy ready prepared rose cordials and syrups, try Belvoir's Raspberry and Rose cordial, or add a splash of Rose Syrup, £8 a bottle from Petersham Nurseries, to a glass of cold Prosecco, to replicate the signature Italian-style aperitif.

BELOW Informally arranged

A profusion of blooms leaves plenty for picking and arranging. A single, toppled rose sits perfectly in a tea cup; several blooms spill over a favourite silver teapot; or combine different roses or other summer flowers, such as hollyhocks or cow parsley. Home-grown roses last longer than bought blooms and can be further prolonged by cutting stems early morning or late afternoon. Snip buds which are already opening just above a leaf axil, with clean, sharp secateurs and place immediately in water. Re-cut whilst submerged and arrange in a clean vessel. Add a drop of bleach and/or rose preservative to the water for longest enjoyment.

RAVISHING RAMBLERS

Climbing and rambling roses bring a special charm to the garden, embellishing and transforming otherwise ordinary structures.

Climbing roses, stout and erect, are best for smothering walls and fences. Thornless Rosa 'Zephirine Drouhin' brings long flushes of large, deep-pink and fragrant double flowers. Classic pink climber 'Madame Gregoire Stachelin' offers one flush of blooms a year but can be forgiven for its beauty and lovely tea-rose perfume, while 'Madame Alfred Carrière' takes some beating, producing endless clouds of blushing white flowers.

Ramblers grow quicker, their lax, pliable growth perfect for entwining arbours, arches and trees with a profusion of smaller, mostly single-flowering blooms. The double pale pink flowers of the Rosa 'Pauls Himalayan Musk', mimic a second blossom. ▶

ROSE PETAL PUNCH

The perfect English summer tippie to enjoy in the garden

- Chill a bottle of still dry white wine and another of semi-dry sparkling wine or champagne.
- Gather about 300 grams of fragrant rose petals from the garden, rinse, ensuring that they are free from chemicals, and place in a bowl,

sprinkling them with 100g of caster sugar.

- Douse with 100ml of a raspberry liqueur and chill for a couple of hours.
- Decant the wines into a punchbowl; strain the petals out of the raspberry and rose syrup and discard. Add the fragrant syrup to the wines.
- Serve from the chilled punchbowl or pour into jugs.





EDIBLE DELIGHT

As if the rose has not delighted us enough with its beauty and perfume, it continues to allure the senses with taste. Rose petals are edible, although remove the inedible stamens and the white flower petal bases, which are quite bitter. The petals can be scattered decoratively on sweets and desserts, or sugar-frosted to embellish and preserve. They can be melted into sweet jellies and jams, else steeped or imbued to extract their desirable rose flavour. Rose waters and syrups can be frozen into delicate ices, or used to impart flavour into summer savoury and sweet dishes and drinks.

Dried rose petals add a unique flavour to perfume-blended teas and their fragrance becomes a distinctive flavour when taken as a tisane. Try adding a sprinkling of dried petals to Earl Grey or black Chinese tea, or sample ready-mixed Whittard's Rose Petal Tea or Twinings Rose Garden Tea.

SUGARED ROSE PETALS

1 egg white
1 dessertspoon of water
10-12 small rose buds and fuller flowers
100g of caster sugar

- Snip the petals off the roses, leave buds intact and discard the yellow stamens and bitter white inner petal tips. Wash petals in salted water and set to dry on paper towels.
- Using a small artist's paintbrush, gently brush each side of the dry petal with egg white. Coat completely or the petals will brown.

- With tweezers, hold the coated petal or rosebud over a cup and sprinkle to coat with fine sugar.
- Tap to shake away surplus sugar, turn and dredge the other side. Place on parchment paper, sprinkle with sugar so as not to stick, and leave to air dry for a few hours, nudging occasionally with the tweezers to prevent them from sticking.
- Use sugared petals and buds to decorate delicious chocolate tortes and sweet summer cupcakes.

SHOWERED WITH LOVE

Traditionally we shower our newly-wed couples in wedding confetti, preferably fresh and fragrant rose petals from the garden, although you can buy pretty cones of dried petals. Keep petals fresh, sealed in plastic bags and decant into pails or cones for the wedding celebrations. You can preserve them for a short period of time by placing loosely on trays in the freezer. Alternatively, prepare dried rose petals in advance by scattering on a tray and leaving to dry in the warmth of an airing cupboard. If you do not have time to do so, you can microwave-dry them, spreading out a handful at a time on kitchen paper, 'cooking' both sides for one minute on high.



LEFT Finishing touch

Edible rose petals make an elegant birthday cake topping, not least when it might be inappropriate to count candles.

ABOVE All natural

Biodegradable, freeze-dried rose petals are perfect for confetti at weddings, such as those from Petals and Roses.

RIGHT Preserve time

If making your own is too time consuming, Fortnum & Mason's Rose Petal Jelly, from £8.95, is a delicious indulgence.



AS SUMMER ENDS...

Rose hips are the seed pods of the rose plant and follow the flowers. If the faded rose flowers are left on the bush at the end of the summer season, the oval red berries will ripen through autumn. Rich in colour and brimming with vitamin C, rose hip syrup was produced in large quantities in wartime Britain when citrus fruits were in short supply. A few rose species are sometimes grown for the ornamental value of their hips, such as *Rosa moyesii*. Try immersing several cleaned and de-seeded rosehips in a jar of honey and leave for a few weeks before spreading delicious rosehip honey on your morning toast. Alternatively, bubble up fragrant rosehip jelly or jam, or combine hips with oranges for textured breakfast marmalade. ■

ROSE HIP JAM RECIPE

*You can make this delicious jam from wild hedgerow hips, *Rosa rugosa*, if you don't have hips of your own*

- Gather a basketful of hips, clean, de-seed and chop into small pieces.
- Put prepared hips and 250ml of water in a jam pan and bring to a rapid boil. Reduce and simmer to soften hips, approximately fifteen minutes. Tip the hips into a sieve and with the back of a spoon, press the pulp through.
- Reserve the puree and weigh. For each 500 grams of puree add 100 grams of sugar.

- Place the puree and sugar mix back in the jam pan and simmer on a low heat, stirring occasionally until the pulp begins to resemble jam.
- Add a small knob of butter to help prevent foaming, then boil rapidly, stirring continually for about 10 minutes, when you can begin to test for 'set'. This can easily be done by placing a drop of 'jam' on a plate from the freezer. On cooling, if it holds together and 'skins' it is ready; if not, continue to bubble until a set is achieved.
- Spoon the mixture into sterilised jam jars and seal, ready for spreading on toast.

English Rose



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ABUNDANT BUNCHES

Award-winning breeder David Austin Roses celebrates the fragrance and forms of old English roses, whilst offering an expansive and diverse colour palette. The company was founded by specialist grower, breeder and author David Austin in 1969 and since that time he has introduced more than 200 varieties of English roses. In 1999 the company put down roots in America, with the opening of the US office in Tyler, Texas. All the David Austin roses sold in America are grown in the country, guaranteeing fresh, quality blooms delivered to the door. Offering ten styles of rose-only bouquets and 15 options containing roses and other blooms and foliage, there is a wide selection to suit many tastes and price ranges. All the bouquets feature roses grown in the US, which are delivered with roses in open bud so the recipient can enjoy them as they unfurl. Deliveries are available from Tuesday to Saturday, all year round. www.davidaustinroses.com

BATHING BEAUTIES

Rose Otto, known as the queen of flower oils, is one of the world's most expensive and revered essential oils, and is more expensive than gold. It takes over 10,000 rose petals to make the rose oil that goes into Ren's now cult Moroccan Rose Otto Bath Oil, which is especially beneficial to dry and sensitive skin. www.renskinicare.com

Heyland and Whittle creates classic soaps using the traditional cold pressed method on its farm in the heart of Surrey. The company's rich rose soap contains organically certified oils. Madder root gives it its deep colour, which is blended with cocoa butter to provide a smooth, creamy texture. www.heylandandwhittle.co.uk

