



A Bunny Tale

Sandy Jones, MGV 2005

Have the rabbits been eating your perennials this summer? I may have stumbled onto a solution that doesn't involve chemical deterrents. Give them something else to eat!

A few weeks ago, I noticed that a small branch that had dropped from my honey locust tree onto my driveway began to have fewer leaves as the days passed. Then, I happened to catch a small bunny eating them! It's a good thing I hadn't rushed to clean up the fallen branch, because I learned something. When the leaves were all gone, I broke off another branch and left it on the driveway. Sure enough, the bunny returned to eat the leaves. I've done this several times now, always leaving it in the same spot on the driveway, and now the bunny appears soon after I leave the branch. Hopefully, he's too full to eat any more of my perennials!



Photo by Sandy Jones

THE ROSE ~ MORE THAN JUST A PRETTY FACE*Kathleen Szabo, MGV 1993*

Most would agree that roses are ornamental perennial shrubs that decorate our gardens with lovely flowers to use in bouquets. But have you ever thought of them as herbs? Since the definition of an herb is *any plant with leaves, seeds, or flowers used for flavoring, food, medicine or perfume*, roses certainly fall into that category. The petals are used to flavor rose water, distilled to produce rose oil for the perfume industry and aromatherapy, or dried to scent potpourris. Fresh or dried, they can also be used to flavor teas and even be candied to sprinkle over desserts. The hips (fruits) are a source of vitamin C and can be used in jams and jellies and even soups. Rose water is made by steeping the rose petals in water. It is used to flavor food, scent cosmetics and for religious purposes. Rose syrup is rose water with sugar added. It is used extensively in Middle Eastern cuisine, especially in sweets such as baklava, halva, and Turkish delight.

I'm going to concentrate on the rose's use in the perfume industry. My interest was piqued when I saw a biography of Christian Dior, the fashion designer, on CBS recently. It mentioned his perfumes and showed the gardens outside his chateau at Montauroux in Provence. That is not far from the town of Grasse, known as the perfume capital of the world. The special climate and soil makes it a perfect region to grow lavender, myrtle, jasmine, rose, orange blossom and wild mimosa, the components of perfumes produced here. Dior was inspired by these beautiful fields and gardens. He filled his own gardens with the native Roses de Mai which are the *Rosa x centifolia* species, also known as Provence rose or cabbage rose. It blooms only in May, hence the name. This hybrid was developed by the Dutch in the 16th century and soon made its way to Provence where fields and fields of them have been growing ever since in the Grasse region. Rose de Mai was grown for its fragrance that has been described as 'clear and sweet, with strong floral and rosy notes that transcends into a spicy, sweet, honey-dew balsamic aroma.' It is an essential ingredient in all of Dior's fragrances, as well as Chanel No. 5 and many others. Today there are still fields of the Mai rose in the Grasse region, but development has displaced many of the old growers and most perfume production has moved to Morocco.



In Grasse, the picking is still done by hand and takes place during May. It is done early in the morning, when the flowers are just opening and before the sun can destroy essential oils. The heads are carefully twisted off and placed in the picker's apron, then into burlap sacks. The sacks are taken to the processor each morning and immediately chilled. They are processed the same day. It takes 5 tons of fresh flowers to produce 6.7 lbs. of May rose oil.