

## DOG ROSE *Rosa canina*

**LATIN EXPLANATION** *Ro-za*; the ancient Latin name for the rose, perhaps from the Celtic *rhod* (red). Experts believe Latin speakers pronounced the word *ros-a* (short 'o'). *Kan-i-na*, a dog, hence the dog rose.

**HEIGHT** - Dog rose tends to 'ramble' through other shrubs for support. The stems are usually 1-2m long, but are capable of reaching 3m or more.

**SOIL TYPE** - It is found on a wide range of soils, tolerating wet but not waterlogged or very dry sites.

**HABITAT** - Dog rose is found along the margins of woodland, on heathland, in hedgerows and scrub. It is extremely tolerant of exposure. If found growing in shade within a wood, it often fails to flower or fruit.

**SHAPE** - A deciduous suckering shrub with strong arching stems. Each stem has sturdy hooked spines (modified stems or branches), which enables it to hold on to supporting shrubs. Occasionally it will form a self-supporting shrub reaching 3m in height.

**ASSOCIATED SPECIES** - It is found with all species but those of acid peat.

**DISTRIBUTION** - Dog rose is found throughout Europe as well as in North Africa and western Asia. In Britain it is widespread, but less common in Scotland. It is found across the whole of lowland Northern Ireland.

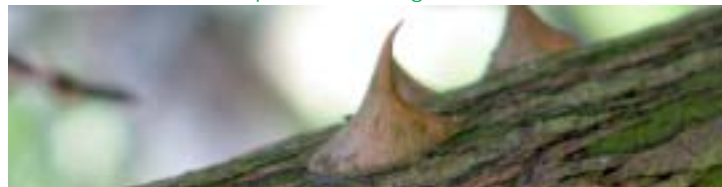
**FLOWERS & SEEDS** - The leaves begin to emerge in April. The flowers, varying in many shades from pale pink to white, open in June and July. The hips, the most distinguishing feature of the dog rose, are scarlet and egg-shaped. They form in late summer but are not fully ripe until October-November. Inside each hip is about twenty or so small hairy seeds.

### INTERESTING FACTS

- The fruits or hips of wild roses are rich in vitamin C. During the Second World War, a campaign to collect them each autumn produced 20 million bottles of rose-hip syrup, which contained as much vitamin C as 25 million oranges.
- *Rosa canina* is still used a great deal for rootstock in Europe, and many grafted roses may be on *Rosa canina* stock. Nurserymen deliberately grow this rose to provide strong rootstocks for the more delicate cultivated roses.
- These cultivated roses that are so popular in gardens have all evolved, with help from humans, over hundreds of years from wild originals.
- The important hybrids known as 'Hybrid Perpetuals' used in rose breeding came about originally through chance pollination by insects.
- The dog rose makes a wonderful addition to a wildlife hedge. Its leaves, flowers and fruits are useful to birds, insects and small mammals.
- It should only be planted in a hawthorn hedge after the hawthorn has become established enough, to cope with the rose's climbing habit, or else kept cut back for the first few years.
- Dog rose on its own will make an excellent thorny barrier after a few years growth. It withstands cutting and helps to make a dense, impenetrable hedge.
- The plant is variable in spine shape, presence or absence of hairs and glands and flower colour. Over sixty forms or 'micro species' have been recognised, but the differences are never great.
- Many are of very local distribution and for this reason it is best, if any planting are made, to propagate from locally-collected seed.
- The extent to which the rose has accompanied humankind is reflected in the fact that the word 'rose' occurs in almost all of the world's languages, it is only absent in the language of the Inuit.



The distinctive, curved spines of the dog rose.



Dog rose hips in October.

