

Nature Notes



Wild Rose

There are actually three species of wild rose found in British Columbia but only an expert would know how to tell them apart so I have focused on the common *Rosa acicularis* or prickly rose.

Wild roses are a low shrub up to 1.5 meters tall. The name *acicularis* means prickly as illustrated by photo. 1.



Photo 1 Rose thorns

Roses prefer clearings, open forests, and rocky slopes and do well on disturbed ground. They can reproduce by seed or by sending up suckers, hence they can form large clumps and may be quite invasive if grown in your yard.

The wild roses are useful to wildlife since the foliage and young stems are forage for ungulates while the fruit is eaten in the fall by coyotes, bears, many birds, and other species. The fruit or rose hips remain on the branches to brighten up the winter landscape with their brilliant red .

Humans appreciate the roses for their cheerful and delicately scented pink flowers.

The first nations people had a variety of uses for wild roses including infrequent use of the rose hip outer case for food (in times of famine), and the making of arrows from rose wood. Rose leaves were chewed and applied to insect bites to alleviate pain and swelling. The thorns from some species were used for fish lures, and the boiled cambium from rose roots was used as an ointment for sore eyes.

Wild roses also held much spiritual value for the first nations peoples.



Photo 2 Prickly rose flower

Rose hips can be used to make jams, jellies, and herbal teas since they contain calcium, vitamin A, and phosphorus as well as a very high content of vitamin C (more than orange juice). However, we hope you leave the rose hips in the Kimberley Nature Park for the wildlife.

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