



'My love is like a red, red rose, that's newly sprung in June' □ Scottish bard, *Robbie Burns*

'Sweet flowers alone can say what passion fears revealing' □ Thomas Hood

While we realize that this column is normally dedicated to what we all should be doing during the month of February to ensure a beautiful garden during the rest of the year, we are stepping outside the box with a piece about the meaning of many of the flowers that you have growing or plan to grow this season. In the spirit of the season, we all recognize the red rose as the ultimate flower symbol of love. A red rose is the traditional romantic gift given to your love on

Valentine's Day, however, different rose colors can send other messages. Some of which are listed below:

Red - True love

White - I love you not

Yellow - Jealousy

Pink - Innocent love and happiness

Orange - I love you vigorously

Purple - I will love you forever

Wild rose - Uncontrollable desire

Moss rose - I admire you from afar

The following information was garnered from several sources that may be a bit subjective since not all of the "experts" tend to agree on some of the meanings; however, we hope you find the information entertaining and enlightening in some fashion.

For hundreds of years flowers have held hidden meanings, derived from mythology, folklore, religious and historical symbolism. The floral bouquet you send or receive brings a special coded message, depending on the flowers you choose.

The study of the meaning of flowers is an actual science known as floriography, and it reveals an extra underlying meaning to sending or receiving flowers - subtle and secret messages can be passed through the different blooms.

During the 18th century sending flower messages based on a Turkish secret language of

flowers became popular. This was known as sending a 'Persian Selam' - a coded bouquet to reveal your feelings of love or attraction. The Victorians became very knowledgeable in flower language and chose their bouquets carefully. Flowers gave them a secret language that enabled them to communicate feelings that the propriety of the times would not allow; there were strict restraints on courtship and any displays of emotion.

Think about the following when ordering your Valentine's day, birthday, anniversary, Mother's day or any other occasion you plan to send flowers to make sure you don't send the wrong message. Even the way you hand over the bouquet sends a message - flowers held in your right hand mean 'yes', whereas flowers held in the left hand mean 'no'.

Anemone - *dying love* - derived from the Greek for 'windflower', mythology relates the anemone sprung from the tears of Aphrodite as she mourned the death of her love, Adonis. In folklore the anemone is believed to bring luck and protection against evil. The flower was said to foretell rain by closing its petals, and fairies were believed to sleep beneath the petals of the wood anemone during the night after they closed at sunset

Bluebell - *constancy and everlasting love* - believed to call the fairies when rung, and thought to be unlucky to walk through a mass of bluebells, because it was full of spells. It is also considered an unlucky flower to pick or bring into the house. The Latin name for this flower is Endymion who was the lover of the moon Goddess, Selene. The goddess put Endymion into an eternal sleep, so she alone could enjoy his beauty. Bluebells were said by herbalists to help prevent nightmares, and used as a remedy against leprosy, spider-bites and tuberculosis, but the bluebell is poisonous.

Carnation - *betrothal, love and fertility* - this flower was believed to be an aphrodisiac, hence its popular use at weddings and because of the association with love it was widely used in wreaths. Gentlemen began to wear carnations as a buttonhole, Oscar Wilde developed the

fashion with a dyed green carnation. The various carnation colors can mean different things: white - love; yellow - rejection; pink - I'll never forget you; red - aching heart;

Forget-me-nots - *true love and remembrance* - mythology describes this as the flower chosen by a brave knight as a posy for his sweetheart before going to battle, as he knelt to gather the tiny blue flowers he fell into a river and was swept away, calling to his love to 'forget me not'.

Honeysuckle - *devoted love* - said to protect your garden from evil. It is known as the 'love bind' - symbolizing a lover's embrace in its clinging growing habits. The heady fragrance of the flowers was believed to induce dreams of love and passion. If the bloom is brought into the house a wedding is said to follow within the year. The honeysuckle's berries are poisonous.

Lily of the Valley - *return to happiness* - a beautifully scented, but highly poisonous flower. It is believed that Lily of the valley protects your gardens from evil spirits. These fragrant blooms supposedly sprang from Eve's tears when she was cast out of the garden of Eden.

Moss - symbolic of *maternal love* - soft and comforting used widely by birds in nesting.

Narcissus - *self-love and vanity* - the flower name derives from Greek mythology and the tale of the beautiful Narcissus. He ignored the lovely nymph, Echo, and so was punished by falling in love with his own reflection in a pool. The gods believed Narcissus would die of starvation, so they transformed him into the delicate form of scented narcissi, so he could stay there forever.

Pansy - *loving thoughts and attraction* - known also as 'heartsease', this pretty flower was believed to heal love problems. Anyone wanting to ensure they were loved by their sweethearts would carry a pansy

Primrose - *first love* - from the Latin 'primus' - meaning first, due to their early spring flowering. The primrose is the sacred flower of Freya, the Norse goddess of love and was used in rituals giving honor to her.

While this is just a small sample of the flowers that comprise many an arrangement, I will bet that many of you will consult with your favorite florist, the next time you send a bouquet! Happy Valentine's Day to all!!