

The healing potential of rose hips: an anthroposophic exploration

Holistic Health Consultant, Nic Parkes delves into the healing potential of rose hips, observing their qualities through the lens of anthroposophy. Inviting us to follow her journey, she experiments with these unique fruits and uncovers how, when combined with others, they may form a powerful, holistic remedy for both body and spirit.

As we go through autumn into winter, the harvest season is in full swing. If the birds have left us any, we can collect rose hips, also known as haws - the small fruits that develop on rose plants after the flowers have been pollinated. The longer they are left, the sweeter they become.

Here is a simple recipe to make a rose hip glycerite.

Glycerites offer an alternative option for herbal extraction. Glycerin does not spike blood sugars and so is also an alternative to a heavy sugar syrup where 66% sucrose is needed for preservation.

Ingredients:

- Ripened rose hips - they should be firm, plump, and bright red or orange.
- Vegetable glycerin - a natural preservative that extracts beneficial compounds while adding a mild sweetness.
- Muslin, cheesecloth or tea towel-type fabric, pre-boiled to sterilise.
- A clean glass jar with a lid.

Instructions:

1. Gather ripened rose hips in their season, typically from late autumn (April) to early winter (June). Frost-ripened is ideal.
2. The fine hairs called trichomes can irritate the throat, so you may want to remove them first. Then cut or mash up the berries, and fill your jar with them.
3. Pour vegetable glycerin over, poking them with a chopstick to ensure saturation. Fill to the top, then cap and label.
4. Wait at least 6 weeks before decanting and straining through a muslin or cheesecloth to remove any solid bits. Press or squeeze out the cloth to extract as much liquid as possible.

Enjoy stirred into water or tea, drizzled over yoghurt or porridge, or used anywhere you might normally add honey. The taste is mild, and depends on the variety used as to intensity, and has subtle floral and fruity notes.

Anthroposophy, the spiritual science developed by Rudolf Steiner, provides a path to cultivate our spiritual-sensing faculties, starting with developing attention, and an attitude of wonder and gratitude. Rudolf Steiner described it as “a path of knowledge, which intends to lead what is spiritual in the human being to what is spiritual in the universe”.

Plants not only serve as food and remedies, but also embody spiritual principles and forces that connect us with the rhythms and energies of nature. They bring the mineral earth to life, with their roots sensing into the earth, and their blossoms and fruit connecting with the warmth and light of the cosmos. Food is a little like a rainbow, a bridge between earth and the cosmos. The human spirit is able to transform the nutrition taken in.

Much has been written about roses and rose hips. How does an anthroposophic view look?



A closer study of the rose shows that it bears the sun's signature. The pentagonal blossom dances with the play of light and darkness. Red roses have the colour of irradiated blood.

The *Rosaceae* family, to which the rose belongs, is the greatest fruit-producing family in the temperate regions, the middle ground between the cold pole and the hot tropics. Those fruits of today, apples, strawberries, pears, cherries and more, are all descendants of the rose.

**FIGURE 1: ROSE FRAU DAGMAR
HASTRUP SHOWING RECEPTACLE BELOW
THE BLOOM.**

In anthroposophy, the connection between body and spirit is fundamental to understanding health and well-being. The nutritive qualities of fruit help body and spirit work harmoniously together. The physiological basis of this function is circulation, which Steiner viewed not just as a means of transporting nutrients, but as a vital force linking the physical body to the spiritual realms. The blood alternates between downward densifying (contraction) and upward sublimation (expansion). Fruit feeds the circulatory processes and even has a direct part in making the blood.¹

¹ Fruit is a different type of substance to the other parts of a plant, formed through cosmic warmth and light. In humans, this process is mirrored in the blood, where digested food diffuses into the bloodstream, and an interplay of earthly and universal forces leads to the creation of human tissue. We can then expect fruit to offer more than just physical nutrition—it also has an effect on circulation of fluids.

Within the *Rosaceae* family, there are different groups of fruit, each with different characters. Rose hips, also referred to as haws, are the fruit of the rose. Haws have numerous pistils, all contained within one receptacle. There is a motherly quality of embracing the pistils.

Radiating out from the receptacle, like rays of light, are the styles, with their bright yellow stigma. Rose hips are rich in Vitamin C, which Rudolf Hauschka, Austrian chemist and anthroposophist, refers to as “latent light” in *The Nature of Substance*.

The physical substances found in the fruit of the rose are tannins, some volatile oils, and carotene - the pigment that absorbs light energy for photosynthesis, relating to the dynamics of light. Additionally, it has sugars, pectin, and fruit acids such as malic acid and citric acid, with ascorbic acid (Vitamin C) being particularly abundant. The seeds in the fruit contain vanillin, a fatty oil, and silica. At the mineral level, the rose hip is rich in iron, calcium, and phosphorus, all of which play important roles in the blood process.



We have analysed the nutritive qualities, but how would I now look to see if a medicine could arise?



FIGURE 3 ROSE HIP L TO R: A RIPE FRUIT; SECTION SHOWING THE ACHENES AND TRICHOMES.

What is the “one-sidedness?”² What pharmaceutical processes are required to bring the plant into the right relationship with the illness process in the human being so that it can address and treat it? Is a compound medicine needed, bringing together different plant parts or substances, and if so, what would the other substances be? For inspiration, I look to the nature around me in my garden and my country, as well as the cosmos. Steiner talked about making preparations from

FIGURE 2 CLOSE UP OF AN ACHENE AND THE SEED INSIDE.

² One-sidedness (imbalance/malformation) in plants often indicates medicinal properties. Plants with imbalanced structures can address similar imbalances in the human body. In humans, one-sidedness (imbalance) signifies a loss of equilibrium or homeostasis, disrupting physical, emotional, and spiritual balance.

the individual parts of plants and then using them singly or in different combinations to achieve the right healing effect.

Regarding the rose hip, the special relationship to the sugar process points to using the hips, with seeds removed, to help diabetes³. The inversion of the fruiting process in the rose and the direction of the silica process relate to enhanced kidney elimination. Here we would want to use the seeds of the fruit.⁴

The fruit acids, carotene and vitamin C are revitalising. The whole fruit becomes a boosting tonic for the metabolism and brightens the senses bringing equilibrium.⁵ What am I looking for here? A way to bring the sun, the light inside, as we go through winter. Winter is the time when we develop our inner light.

The distillation process to produce a hydrosol, a water-based solution containing the beneficial compounds of plants, using the warmth and water elements, could be useful. I am a fan of mixed distillations using the right still (Alquitar, column or traditional), devices designed separate the plant's different compounds through heating and condensation. To find the right ingredients to bring together in the process, I first need to observe and converse with nature's gifts, research using the tools of natural science, and then bring this together with the spiritual scientific research process.

I have already used rose blossom flowers in my Pounamu/Helianthus comp. oral liquid and Pounamu/Aurum salve, but am now inspired to explore rose hips. When combined with other plants or minerals they could potentially form a powerful, holistic healing remedy.

Many other Rosaceae family members are used in anthroposophic medicine, like quince, hawthorn, and herb bennet, each addressing different imbalances such as allergies, circulation, and digestion.

As I continue this exploration, I invite you to follow me as I share future discoveries and formulations that may come to life on my website. I also encourage you to embark on your own journey of discovery through embodied, Goethean-style observation—an approach to understanding nature holistically and intuitively. For more insights, consider exploring Taruna College's The Art of Well Being programme, which includes foundational anthroposophy courses and workshops.

³ The rose family plants produce sugar in abundance, but give it up selflessly in the fruit. Diabetes is a disease involving sugar dysregulation. "Wherever sugar is present, I-organization is present; wherever sugar arises, the I-organization appears in order to give a human orientation to sub-human (vegetative, animal) corporeality". (Ch 8 Fundamentals of Therapy, R Steiner, I Wegman). Diabetes results from a weakness in the I-organisation.

⁴ The way a plant sets fruit and seed is an expression of its underlying character. The silica process swings between that of taking up water, maintaining a plastic (colloidal) fluidity, and at the other extreme, of ridding itself of water to become a rigid rock crystal. The seed of the rose hip has a diuretic action.

⁵ Wilhelm Pelikan describes the rose's signature as "perfect moderation in the midst of plenty." Strengthening the middle realm brings balance to the poles. Vitamin A is related to the warmth element, while Vitamin C is linked to light. Fruit acids (malic and citric) play a key role in the Krebs cycle, where cellular energy is produced.

*The flowers all bloom
As ordained on high
They would they were roses.*

*Men all strive
In the presence of love
Sun, be on earth.*

*Sun, teach me to be
Gentle as your rays,
Never ending.*

*Rose, teach me to
flower In humanity
In thanks to God.*

Herbert Hahn

About author:

Nic Parkes is the Honorary Treasurer for the Anthroposophical Society in New Zealand and works closely with the International Circle of Treasurers of the General Anthroposophical Society. She is a Holistic Health Consultant with a background in pharmacy, Bowen therapy, and organic growing, and expertise in herbal, homeopathic, and anthroposophic medicine. Nic handcrafts personalised remedies imbued with her spirit at her clinic *Healing Lands* in Hastings. She has been a member of Biodynamics New Zealand for 25 years.

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