



### #3: The Plant Hunt – Fragrant Flowers

For Part 3 of our Plant Hunt we're focusing on flowers that are well known for their scent. Drinking deeply in the scent of a flower is one of the richest ways to enjoy a garden. Remember that as the day warms up, the fragrance oils in flowers start to evaporate, so early in the morning or late in the evening are the best times of day to experience a plant's perfume.

Happy Plant Hunting!



### Honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum* & *japonica*)

This twining, climbing plant threads its way through hedgerows and trees. They are often planted in gardens because of the delicious sweet scent produced by the flowers. The scent is strongest at night to attract pollinating moths. The flowers are tubular, opening out into two yellow/white petals. The flowers buds are often tinged pink. The leaves grow in pairs opposite each other, down the stems.



### Wild Garlic/Ramsons (*Allium ursinum*)

If you go down to the woods today they may smell slightly of garlic! While their scent will never compare to the sweetness of the other plants on this list, the odour of Ramsons is one of the most remarkable and certainly the most distinctive contribution of wild plants to the way our landscape smells!

It is getting to the end of wild garlic's flowering season, but in woods, especially growing near streams you are still likely to find them. They have broad, sword shaped leaves which grow from bulbs. Their flowers are dainty white stars growing in spherical umbels.



## Elder (*Sambucus nigra*)

Elder is a prolific shrub which enjoys sinking its roots into rich soil, for example in church yards, hedgerows and on the edges of woodland. It is easy to spot at the moment, as they are enthusiastically covering themselves with clusters of creamy white flowers, which have a lovely honey-musk fragrance. The flowers grow on corymbs – these look a lot like umbels, but instead of all the stalks (pedicels) bearing the flowers all coming from the same point and radiating out, they grow down the stem which bears the whole flowerhead so the older flowers have longer pedicels than the younger ones. Elder's leaves are pinnate with 5-7 leaflets.

Elder's name doesn't come, as you might think, from the word "old" but from the Anglo-Saxon "*æld*" meaning "fire" because the young stems are hollow and were used to blow air onto a fire. It has many other traditional uses: it might be best known for flavouring *elderflower* and *elderberry* drinks, but did you know that hanging bunches of fresh elder leaves about is meant to deter flies and midges? The pith inside the young stems is also one of the lightest natural solids – its specific gravity is 0.09 whereas cork's is 0.24.



## Dog Rose (*Rosa canina*)

How could we miss roses? Our national flower, there are 14 wild species of rose native to the UK but the one you are most likely to see growing in Birmingham is the Dog Rose. You can find it rambling through hedgerows, sporting white/pink flowers with five heart shaped petals. The leaves are pinnate with slightly serrated edges.

This old riddle gives a good way to be sure that the rose you've found is a dog rose and not another wild species:

*"On a summer's day, in sultry weather*

*Five Brethren were born together.*

*Two had beards and two had none*

*And the other had but half a one."*

The Brethren refer to the sepals (the green parts of the flower than encase the petals before the flower opens). Dog roses have two sepals with whiskers down both sides, two smooth sepals without any whiskers and another sepal which has whiskers on one side only.



### Japanese Rose (*Rosa rugosa*)

The Japanese rose is a frequently used landscaping shrub. It has deep pink flowers which are very strongly scented. It expands by suckers, forming a thicket of upright, very spiny stems. Their leaves are shaped like a dog rose but they are more textured (*rugosa* means “wrinkled” in latin – a reference to the leaves).



## Garden Roses

There are so many garden roses that are blooming beautifully at the moment that it would impossible to try to describe them all. Enjoy them all while they last!