

Herbal Medicine in Stamps: History of Rosa Canina through Philately

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ABSTRACT

The fruit (hips) of *R. canina* have long been recognized for their medicinal and nutritional value. *R. canina* is native to Europe, western/central Asia, and northern Africa, and rose hips have been used in many cultures for centuries. Recommendations for its use exist in Tibetan medicine, and mentioned in the works of Avicenna, and even in manuscripts of biblical times. More recently, *R. canina* hips were used in syrup form to prevent scurvy during World War II. The importance of *R. canina* is reflected in philately. Stamps are labels used to show payment of postage fees, but their graphic designs also serve to depict the cultural aspects of the issuing country and society. The aim of this study was to show the historical importance of the medicinal and aromatic plant *R. canina* through stamps. A search of the most respected resources of the philately world (Scott and Michel catalogues) revealed twenty three stamps related to *R. canina* issued by nineteen countries worldwide. It is recommended to use stamps as an inexpensive but attention-getting promotional item for healthcare providers and the public to introduce medicinal and aromatic plants.

Key words: Rosa canina, dog rose, history, stamps, philately

INTRODUCTION

Since antiquity, various natural resources have been used for medical purposes. Herbs have traditionally played a key role in both medicine and public health. ^[1] Herbs were found to be therapeutically valuable due either to their inhibitory effects on pathogens or their positive effects on the human body. ^[2] The World Health Organization estimated that 75-80% of the

world's population is treated with natural remedies. ^[3] *Rosa canina*, known as "dog rose" in English and "kuşburnu" in Turkish, grows wild in various parts of the world and produces fruit called rose hips. ^[2,3] Rose hips have been used in many cultures for centuries, and are referred to in Tibetan medicine, the works of Avicenna, and even in manuscripts from biblical times. ^[4] The dog rose was a symbol of good luck and strength in the middle Ages. It was believed that burning rose hip incense would ward off evil spirits, and houses were ritually decorated with dog rose blossoms during spring festivals. ^[4] During World War II, *R. canina* hips were used in syrup form to prevent scurvy. ^[5]

For centuries, roses have been used for their cosmetic, medicinal, aromatic, and culinary properties. ^[4] *R. canina* is a species from the Rosaceae family. ^[5] The species is native to Europe, Africa, and Asia, but is now present all over the world. Rose hips are used as a food throughout the world as well as in the treatment of many medical diseases as herbal medicine. Rose hips are most commonly dried to make tea or made into marmalade, or can be eaten directly as fruit. ^[3] They can also be used to make syrup, sauce, soup, wine, brandy, or vermouth.

Rose hips contain vitamins A, B1, B2, B3, and K, tannins, and flavonoids. They have been used in folk medicine as anti-fever, anti-arthritis, laxative, anti-gout, diuretic and anti-cold and also as a cure for vitamin C deficiency. ^[6] Rose hips are claimed to be beneficial in the treatment of various conditions including nephralgia and cystalgia (kidney and bladder disorders),

hypertonia, bilious and liver problems, enteritis, and anorexia. [7] Fresh rose hip pulp is applied to inflamed skin to facilitate wound healing. It is effective in the treatment of rheumatism and joint disorders and the relief of rheumatism pain have been proven by clinical investigations. It boosts immunity against cancer and heart diseases. Rose hip tea is recommended for patients with enteritis. Rose hip is also administered to patients with bronchitis, cold, flu, and feverish states. [6,7] It cleans and prevents staining in the lungs and opens the bronchi, especially in bronchitis. Rose hip is used to treat urinary tract infections and reduces pain and burning during urination. [6,7]

The literature shows that health care providers have generally positive attitudes towards herbs but do not have inadequate knowledge about their application. [8,9] It was reported that 67% of Taiwanese nursing students were found to have knowledge of Chinese medicine and herbs. [10] In Turkey, therapeutic use of herbal products is common among women and increases with age. [11] A nursing study from Turkey reported that 36% of cancer patients use supportive treatments like herbs. [12] Another Turkish study conducted with nursing students reported that students had positive attitudes towards alternative treatments, but had inadequate information on this subject. [9] A study of Turkish medical students determined that they do not have enough knowledge about medicinal herbs, although rose hip was the most commonly recognized herb among the medical students. [8] Medicinal and aromatic herbs are used as alternative medicine in Europe and Asia. However, most of the doctors in the United States of America are unaware of the effects and side effects of herbal medicines. [13] Lectures on the potential benefits and risks of herbs and their local application in the community should be incorporated to the medical curricula. [8] In this context, it is recommended to use stamps as a noticeable and inexpensive promotional item for both healthcare providers and the public.

ROSA CANINA IN STAMPS

A postage stamp is a generally square or rectangular label used throughout the world to show that postage has been paid. In addition to the revolution that the appearances of the postage stamp lead to in the world and in Turkey, the stamp also became a hobby for collectors as well as an investment tool. [14,15] As a communications tool, the stamp has many other functions besides acting as a substitute for postage fee. [14,16] The most important of these functions is its role as an advertisement tool and as a cultural reflection of the issuing country through the graphics featured on it. Postage stamp design is a visual communication art whose primary purpose is to transmit a message. [14,15] Postage stamps have been used as visual promotional tools to draw attention to medicinal and aromatic plants in many countries. These stamps, printed and sold between 1945 and 2005, provided an important service in introducing *R. canina* as a medicinal and aromatic plant both at the national and international level. [15,16,17,18] In the present study, a search of the most respected sources of the philately world (Scott and Michel catalogues) yielded twenty three stamps and two first day covers depicting *R. canina* and rose hips from nineteen countries: Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechoslovakia, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Hungary, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Switzerland, Soviet Union, Sweden, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, and Yugoslavia. [17,18,19,20]

In traditional Austrian medicine, rose hips have been used internally as tea for treatment of viral infections and disorders of the kidneys and urinary tract. [21] The Dog Rose (*Rosa canina*) stamp was sold by the Austrian post office on May 14th, 1948. The stamp was sold for 75+35 Austrian groschen (Figure 2). [17] In addition, *R. canina* is one of the national symbols of Romania. [22] The Romanian postage service has two stamps issued on *R. canina* (Figures 4 and 19). The first stamps were expired on

November 25th, 1959 and sold for 1.75 Romanian leu. The second stamp was listed on a plant series and expired on March 30th, 1993. [17]

The high vitamin C content of rose hips was utilized during World War II. When Britain was unable to import fresh citrus fruits, the government organized the gathering of dog rose hips, which were known to be a rich source of vitamin C. [23] Processed into syrup the rose hips helped to prevent scurvy and, today, the plant is valued as a rich source of vitamin C. *R. canina* has also appeared on British stamps. [20, 23] The colorful illustrations of the flowers of Great Britain were the subjects of Michael Goman's vivid designs for the stamps, which were put on sale on August 5th, 1964 to mark the 10th International Botanical Congress held in Edinburgh from August 3rd to 12th (Figure 7). [20]

The first day stamp cover of the 10th International Botanical Congress (1964) is

shown in Figure 8. *R. canina* was introduced in Czechoslovakia (1965) by the stamp in their plants series (Figure 9). The dog rose is illustrated as part of a commemorative set issued for the International Congress of Pharmacology held in Prague in 1971 (Figure 10). [23]

In Bulgaria, where *R. canina* grows in abundance, the hips are used to make a sweet wine as well as tea. [24] The Bulgarian stamp named *Rosa canina* is listed in a medicinal plants series. The stamp was sold for 43 Bulgarian stotinka (Figure 15). [19] The *R. canina* stamp was also introduced in Turkey in 2001 as part of a series on medicinal plants (Figure 20). [16] A first day stamp cover of those stamps is shown in Figure 21. [16] Hips of *R. canina* are used as a flavoring in the Slovenian soft drink Cocktail (Figure 22). [25] The Slovenian stamp was named ŠIPEK *Rosa canina*. It is listed as number SI 396 in the Michel catalogue of postage stamps. [17]

Table1. List of Philatelic Materials

Name	Country	Issued on	Michel no
Rosa canina	Switzerland	01.12.1945	Scott B 152
Dog Rose (Rosa canina)	Austria	14.05.1948	AT 874
Rosa canina	Yugoslavia	24.09.1955	YU 771
Rosa canina	Romania	25.11.1959	RO 1822
Rosa canina	Soviet Union	13.12.1960	SU 2425
Hagebutte Rosa canina	Germany	07.04.1960	DD 761
10th International Botanical Congress Set Fine Mint	Great Britain	05.08.1964	Scott 414-17
Rosa canina	Czechoslovakia	06.12.1965	CS 1589
International Congress of Pharmacology in Prague	Czechoslovakia	1971	Scott 1773
Hagebutte Rosa canina	Germany	10.01.1978	DD2287
Rosa canina-Cetonia aurata	Hungary	25.01.1980	HU 3408A
Steinnype Rosa canina	Norway	14.11.1980	NO 826
Dzika Rosa	Poland	1981	-
Rosa canina	Bulgaria	22.01.1981	BG 2968
Nypon ros Rosa canina	Sweden	10.02.1983	SE 1221
Dzika Rosa	Poland	19.12.1989	PL 3245
Rosa canina	Greece	08.12.1989	GR 1731
Rosa canina	Romania	30.03.1993	RO 4871
Rosa canina	Turkey	27.06.2001	TR3427
ŠIPEK Rosa canina	Slovenia	22.05.2002	SI 396
Eglantier Rosa canina	Tunisia	25.09.2003	TN 1570
Pasta Ruza (Rosa canina)	Croatia	05.06.2004	HR 687
Rosa canina	Ukraine	19.11.2005	UA 755AI

CONCLUSION

Stamps represent a country's history, art, culture, and politics, and can also be used as an educational tool. This property makes stamp design a visual communication art. *R. canina* (dog rose) has been featured

on stamps in nineteen countries from all over the world in order to promote this medicinal and aromatic plant. In this context, it is recommended to use stamps as an inexpensive but attention-getting promotional item for healthcare providers

and the public to introduce medicinal and aromatic plants.

Conflict of interest statement: None declared.

Note: The study was presented as an oral presentation in 1st International Congress on Medicinal and Aromatic Plants, held from May 10 to 12, 2017 in Konya, Turkey.

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APPENDIX



Figure1. Switzerland (1945) Rosa Canina, Plants Series



Figure5. Soviet Union (1960) Rosa Canina L., Plants Series



Figure 9. Czechoslovakia (1965) Rosa Canina, Plants Series



Figure2. Austria (1948) Dog Rose (Rosa Canina), Flowers Series



Figure6. Germany (1960) Rosa Canina, Medicinal Plants Series



Figure10. Czechoslovakia (1971) International Congress of Pharmacology in Prague, Medicinal Herbs Series



Figure3. Yugoslavia (1955) Rosa Canina, Plants Series



Figure7. Great Britain (1964), 10th International Botanical Congress Set Fine Mint, Plants Series



Figure11. Germany (1978) Rosa Canina, Medicinal Plants Series



Figure 4. Romania (1959) Rosa Canina, Plants Series



Figure8. Great Britain (1964), First Day Stamp Cover



Figure12. Hungary (1980) Dog Rose (Rosa canina), Flowers Series



Figure13. Norway (1980) Steinnype Rosa Canina, Plants Series



Figure16. Sweden (1983) Nypon ros Rosa Canina, Fruits Series



Figure19. Romania (1993) Rosa Canina L., Plants Series



Figure14. Poland (1981), Roza Dzika Rosa Canina L., Medicinal Plants Series



Figure17. Poland (1989) Dzika Roza, Medicinal Plants Series



Figure20. Turkey (2001) Kuşburnu Rosa canina, Medicinal Plants Series



Figure15. Bulgaria (1981) Rosa Canina, Medicinal Plants Series



Figure18. Greece (1989) Rosa Canina, Flowers Series



Figure21. Turkey (2001), First Day Stamp Cover



Figure22. Slovenia (2002) ŠIPEK Rosa Canina, Medicinal Plants Series



Figure24. Croatia (2004) Pasja Ruza Rosa Canina, Plants Series



Figure23. Tunisia (2003) Eglantier Rosa Canina, Plants Series



Figure25. Ukraine (2005) "About Ukraine" Rosa Canina, Plants Series

