



## Rosa banksiae

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*Rosa banksiae*, common names Lady Banks' rose, or just Banks' rose, is a species of flowering plant in the rose family, native to central and western China, in the provinces of Gansu, Guizhou, Henan, Hubei, Jiangsu, Sichuan and Yunnan, at altitudes of 500–2,200 m (1,640–7,218 ft).

### Description

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It is a scrambling shrubby vine growing vigorously to 6 m (20 ft) tall. Unlike most roses, it is practically thornless, though it may bear some prickles up to 5 mm long, particularly on stout, strong shoots. The leaves are evergreen, 4–6 cm long, with three to five (rarely seven) leaflets 2–5 cm long with a serrated margin. The flowers are small, 1.5–2.5 cm diameter, white or pale yellow. It is amongst the earliest flowering of all roses, usually appearing during May in the northern hemisphere, though cold weather can delay flowering. All Lady Banks' roses are said to smell of violets to varying degrees.

The rose is named for Lady Banks, the wife of the botanist Sir Joseph Banks.

### Varieties

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There are two varieties:

- *R. banksiae* var. *banksiae* – flowers semi-double or double, with numerous petals replacing most or all of the stamens; a cultigen developed in Chinese gardens
- *R. banksiae* var. *normalis* – flowers single, with five petals; the natural wild form of the species

## Cultivation and uses

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*Rosa banksiae* has likely been grown in the gardens of China for hundreds of years. The species was introduced to Europe by William Kerr, who had been sent on a plant-hunting expedition by Sir Joseph Banks. He bought the first Lady Banks' Rose, subsequently named the white Lady Banks (*R. banksiae* var. *banksiae*) from the famous Fa Tee nursery in 1807. A number of other forms were subsequently discovered growing in China, including *R. banksiae* var. *normalis* (see above), and *R. banksiae* 'Lutea', the yellow Lady Banks' rose (brought to Europe in 1824 by J. D. Parks). In 1993 this cultivar earned the Royal Horticultural Society's Award of Garden Merit.

An *R. banksiae* planted in Tombstone, Arizona in 1885 is reputedly the world's largest rose bush. It covers up to 9,000 square feet (840 m<sup>2</sup>) of the roof on an inn, and has a 12-foot (3.7 m) circumference trunk.