

## Genetic Resources of Roses and Their Conservation®

### Yoshihiro Ueda

Gifu International Academy of Horticulture, 1094-8 Shio, Kani-shi, Gifu Pref., 509-0251, Japan  
Email: ueda-yoshihiro@horticulture.ac.jp

### INTRODUCTION

The genus *Rosa* belongs to Rosaceae and is widely distributed throughout the temperate and subtropical regions of the Northern Hemisphere, from Ethiopia to Siberia. Number of species is between 150 and 200, although there is much variation in number of species by taxonomists. Among these species, there are 12 species and three varieties native to Japan.

### THE ORIGIN OF CULTIVATED ROSES AND VARIETAL DIFFERENTIATION

The cultivation of roses started for perfume and medicinal use. The origin goes back to ancient Persia. In Greek and Roman time, roses were widely cultivated and the people of Roman used many rose flowers. And then, roses were developed as ornamental plants because of the elegant flowers. Cultivars were bred from wild species both in Europe and China. Since the 19th century, European cultivated roses were hybridized with Chinese taxa and a new phase of breeding was developed. As ornamental plants various cultivars have been developed for ornamental garden, cut flower, and potted plant uses. According to *Modern Roses XI* published by the American Rose Society as the international rose register, there are more than 24,000 cultivars listed. In the *Combined Rose List* printed in U.S.A., there are about 15,000 cultivars listed on the market.

### CONSERVATION OF GENETIC RESOURCES

These cultivars and species are planted and conserved in various rose gardens and private gardens throughout the world. In Japan, about 7,000 taxa are planted in Flower Festival Commemorative Park of Gifu Prefecture and these collections were greatly contributed to by an Italian rose collector. The most famous rose garden is Sangerhausen Rosarium in Germany and there are about 8,000 taxa in the garden. There also are some important rose garden especially in France and Australia. In the United Kingdom the National Council for the Conservation of Plants and Gardens plays an important part in conservation of plant genetic resources and it conserves some special rose collections.

In order to support such conservation activities, the World Federation of Rose Societies (WFRS) organize the Heritage Roses Committee and the Conservation Committees established a database of genetic resources and hold international heritage rose conferences every 3 years. The 12th International Heritage Rose Conference will be held in Sakura, Japan, in 2011 under the auspices of WFRS.