

Wild Roses and Rose Industry in Iran[©]

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Iran is the original place of oil-yielding roses and the roses were cultivated in the mountains of southern Persia (Iran) for religious ceremonies in B.C. 12 century. I visited Iran in 2010 to research the long history of rose oil and rose water production, and explore wild rose species native to Iran (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1. Map of Iran, (A) The place of field research, (B) Meymand, and (C) Darab.

In Iran, there are about 14 species of genus *Rosa* reported to exist. Among them, *Rosa persica* Michx. is one of the most famous species and recently, the breeding using *R. persica* or the persica hybrids has been becoming popular. We went out into the field to observe wild plants which were located in 300 km west from Mashhad. During the observation I found *R. persica* and *R. hemisphaerica* Herrm. *Rosa persica* was growing in the dry slope. *Rosa moschata* Herrm. was used as a hedge plant and was planted lining a street.

Damask rose (*R. damascena* Mill.) is widely cultivated throughout Iran and there are many local cultivars. An Iranian researcher suggests that Iran is the center of diversity of Damask rose and gave us some clues about the unknown center of origin of this rose. Fars Province is located in the southern part of Iran and Shiraz is capital city of Fars. Shiraz and surrounding areas have a long history in production of rose water. I visited Meymand near Shiraz which is an ancient city and one of the famous production areas of rose water and rose oil. In Meymand (Fig. 2), I also saw a store specializing in rose water.

In Darab, there is a huge production area of Damask rose and the total area in and around Darab is about 4,000 ha (Fig. 3). In Fars province including Meymand and Drab, total production area of Damask rose is about 4,500 ha.

Low air humidity, bright sunshine, continuous and considerable temperature fluctuations, rather warm winter and ample irrigation are suitable conditions to grow Damask rose. Therefore, the climate of Fars Province might provide such conditions.



Fig. 2. Still for rose oil and rose water production.



Fig. 3. Production field of Damask rose in Darab. (Photograph by courtesy of Dr. A. Karami of Shiraz University).

The main product using Damask rose is rose water in Iran. They are use for drinking water, cosmetic, and cooking.

In Iran the musk rose is also an important rose for extracting rose water and rose oil.