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# CLIPPINGS

*A Weekly Column from Iowa State University Extension and Outreach*

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Week of May 8, 2017

**For Immediate Release**

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## **All About Roses**

*Beth Ellen Doran, Beef Program Specialist and Iowa Master Gardener*

Each May, we are surrounded by roses. Whether it's the Kentucky Derby, Mother's Day or Iowa's roadside ditches, roses are definitely front and center.

For instance, the Kentucky Derby has long been known as the "Run for the Roses." But in 1896, the first rose garland contained pink and white roses, not red roses. It wasn't until 1904 that the red rose became the official flower for the Kentucky Derby and in 1932, today's garland as we know it, first appeared.

This garland consists of more than 400 "Freedom Roses" sewn into a green satin backing. On one end is the seal of the Commonwealth. The other end has the Twin Spires and the number of the current Kentucky Derby, which is "143" for the 2017 Derby. Each garland has a "crown" of roses in the center, green fern and ribbon. The garland measures 122 inches long, 22 inches wide and weighs approximately 40 pounds.

Speaking of Mother's Day, roses have an interesting legend. Roses were thought to be sacred to the Greek Goddess, Isis, who was seen as the ideal mother. Pink roses signify grace, elegance and appreciation; whereas, yellow roses signify friendship and joy. Either makes an extra special gift for Mom!

And now to the wild rose – designated the state flower of Iowa in 1897. It was chosen because it was one of the decorations on the silver service presented to the battleship USS Iowa that same year. Wild prairie roses can be found throughout Iowa, blooming from May through late June, in roadside ditches.



The flower of the wild rose, in varying shades of pink, is set off with many yellow stamens in the center. But perhaps the most intriguing aspect of this plant is its sweet fragrance, which no perfume can quite replicate. So, enjoy a Sunday drive – take in these delicate flowers and explore the natural beauty of Iowa!

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