

### Tell Me Something I Don't Know

In World War II British soldiers were suffering of Scurvy, a disease caused by lack of vitamin C, because fruits known for their vitamin C properties, such as citrus, were not easily accessible in the midst of the war. What did the British use in lieu of citrus fruits to get their vitamin C and prevent scurvy?

They used rose hips. (Sometimes also referred to as rose haws or rose heps) Rose hips are the fruit of the rose bush that appear after the flower has died. They are reportedly best harvested after they have been frozen and then thawed. Once they have been harvested they can be used either dried or fresh. There are many different varieties of roses, but the ones the British used in World War II were *rosa rubiginosa* and *rosa canina*, (commonly referred to as sweet briar rose and dog rose respectively) as both species are native to Europe and high in vitamin C. The nation was so desperate for vitamin C that they even declared a national week to collect rosehips in the heat of war. The harvested rose hips were then used to make a syrup. This syrup was used as a supplement and sold in stores throughout the nation and was not only used for troops but children as well. Even though rose hips didn't become popular until WWII they were used by the ancient Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, Chinese, and Native Americans for a variety of reasons. Early Christians even thought rose hips were sacred and made the first rosaries out of them. Today we know that rose hips contain fifty percent more vitamin C than citrus fruits. Not only are they high in vitamin C but they are also high antioxidants, which means they can help prevent everything from the common cold to cancer. Overall they have a rather extensive variety of uses. For example, they can be used for their antiviral and astringent properties. They have also been used as a mild laxative and diuretic. Because of their ability to alleviate inflammation they are also used to help treat some types of arthritis. There have also been claims that rose hip tea helps reduce stress and anxiety.

They can be consumed in a variety of ways, including but not limited to in vitamin C supplements, teas, jellies, jams, pies, wine, marmalade and they can also be eaten raw. Although if eaten raw the seeds must be avoided because the seeds are coated in small hairs that are used to make itching powder. In summary, rose hips have been valued for their medicinal purposes throughout history and their use continues today.

Works Cited

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