

Did You Know?



Pinks *Dianthus* spp.

- *Dianthus* is a large genus which includes *D. caryophyllus* (carnation or clove pinks) as well as *D. plumarius* (cottage pinks), *D. barbatus* (Sweet William), among many others.
- There are many hybrids and varieties in the *Dianthus* family. The modern carnation has been bred from various species of *Dianthus*. The characteristic spicy clove fragrance has been lost in some.
- In addition to being favorite garden flowers, *Dianthus* have been part of traditional medicine in communities around the world for centuries. It has been used to treat fever, kidney stones, urinary tract infections, constipation and dysmenorrhea among other ailments.
- It is thought that the Roman's added *Dianthus* flowers to wine to infuse the clove-like fragrance. England, in the Middle-Ages, did this as well which was the source of the garden pink being called sops-in-wine.
- A red or scarlet carnation was adopted as the official state flower in 1904, to honor President William McKinley who liked to wear a red carnation in the buttonhole on the lapel of his jacket.
- Carnations became the symbol of Mother's Day when Miss Anna Jarvis sent 500 white carnations in honor of her mother to everyone in her mother's church on the very first Mother's Day in 1908. She requested that the flower be considered representative of purity, strength and endurance, symbols of ideal motherhood.
- Carnations and various colors are used around the world for a wide variety of special occasions and to express sentiments mostly relating to love, appreciation, and distinction. The color of the flower may be specific for the feeling.
- Culinary uses for *Dianthus* flowers include flavoring beverages including wine, cordials and cocktails, simple syrups for beverages and desserts, and adding to butter and vinegar. The flowers can be candied, pickled, added to salads, desserts, and as edible garnishes.
- Since the 17th century, carnation petals have been used in the making of the French liqueur Chartreuse.
- Most *Dianthus* plants grow in full sun and prefer well-drained neutral to alkaline soil. They are grown as either perennial or annual plants, ranging in hardiness from Zones 3-9.

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