

## February EcoQuest: Not All Roses Are Red

Roses have a long and colorful history. They have been used as symbols of love, beauty, war and even politics. With Valentine's Day approaching, you may be tempted to begin expressions of tender feelings with "roses are red, violets are blue", but alas, Colorado native roses are not red at all! In fact, all our native roses showcase pink flowers. Native roses are also different than cultivated roses in the number of petals – in native roses you will only see five petals, while you can see many petals in cultivated roses. These numerous petals in cultivated roses are derived from modified stamens and bred to retain this characteristic.

In the metro area, there are three species of native roses that you may encounter – *Rosa acicularis* (prickly rose), *R. arkansana* (prairie rose), and *R. woodsii* (Wood's rose). Although it is winter now and these roses are not in flower, their fruit can still be

seen hanging from plants. The fruit of a rose is known as a rosehip (more technically, achenes enclosed within a fleshy hypanthium). *Rosa woodsii* can be easily separated from the other two species by the absence of prickles on new growth. *Rosa acicularis* and *R. arkansana* are a little more difficult to separate this time of year – *R. acicularis* is separated from *R. arkansana* by the number of leaflets (5-7 vs. 9-11), and the presence of glands on the tips of the teeth along the leaflet margins.

See if you can locate some native roses as you venture outside this winter and help Denver Botanic Gardens document their range by photographing as many plants as possible in the month of February. Post your findings to [iNaturalist](https://www.inaturalist.org) so they will automatically be added to the Denver EcoFlora Project.



Roses (Genus *Rosa*), [ellen](#), some rights reserved, CC BY-NC.



Woods' Rose (*Rosa woodsii*), [Matt Langemeier](#), some rights reserved, CC BY-NC.

### What is an EcoQuest?

EcoQuests, part of the Denver EcoFlora project, challenge citizens to become citizen scientists and observe, study and conserve the native plants of the City via iNaturalist, an easy-to-use mobile app.

### How Do I Get Started?

1. Download the iNaturalist app or register online at [iNaturalist.org](https://www.inaturalist.org).
2. Take photos of the plants in bloom that you find on your daily neighborhood walk. It is ok if they are weeds! But avoid taking photos of cultivated plants in gardens or in your home.
3. If you are concerned about revealing the location of sensitive organisms or observations at your own house, you can hide the exact location from the public by changing the "geoprivacy" of the observation to "obscured."

4. Post your findings on iNaturalist via the app.
5. Your observations will automatically be added to the [Denver EcoFlora Project](#).
6. You can add an identification to your photo when you post your findings on iNaturalist, or leave it blank for others to identify.

### What is the Goal?

The EcoFlora project is designed to meaningfully connect citizens with biodiversity, and to assemble novel observations and data on the metro area's flora to better inform policy decisions and conservation strategies.



Photo by Scott Dressel-Martin