ROSE-WATER FROM THE HOME GARDEN

TO speak of making one's own rose-water seems like speaking of the generation of our grandmothers; yet nothing is more easy and simple, and I know of at least one old garden where it has been made not many years ago.

Throughout the South it is a very common thing to find hedges of the hundred leaf rose (*Rosa centifolia*), or, as it is usually called, "rose-water rose," bordering the garden walks. This is the old Province rose, and is, perhaps, more than any other flower suggestive of colonial gardens. It is perfectly hardy everywhere, and makes thick shrubby growth; so, although it blooms but once in a season, yet it makes, if given a little care, a very good hedge for some out-of-the-way walk. The bloom is a lovely soft, silvery pink, very double, rather flat, and the petals are usually twisted up into a tight little roll around the center, showing the pistil.

From a double hedge-row bordering a walk about thirty feet long, the writer remembers gathering bushel after bushel of the sweet pink heads, snapping the stems just below the calyx. It is best, if possible, to be early at the work and catch the dew still on the flowers, as they are then more thoroughly and evenly dampened; otherwise, they must be sprinkled well before being put into the still.

After the gathering (a half bushel at a time is plenty for a small still), try the delights of plunging your arms up to the elbows in the cool mass; then get to work again and break the heads to pieces. The petals may be pulled from the calyx (which is then thrown away), or the whole blossom may be broken in two at the heart, calyx and all. The latter way is rather to be preferred, as it is not only quicker but gives an added poignancy to the water. The mass is then packed tightly in an ordinary tin still, and placed on a cool part of the range.

The simplest still is made in two sections. The lower one holds the tightly compressed mass of leaves, and the upper one, about equal in size, consists of an inverted cone with an outer rim higher than the tip of the cone, which holds cold water. This serves to condense the steam from the rose-leaves on the inside of the cone, where a narrow rim catches the condensed steam, leading it to a long pipe through which it drips drop by drop,—the pure and unadulterated article. Care must be taken to prevent the slightest scorching, but that is quite unnecessary, as only a very gentle heat is required.

After the leaves have yielded all their water, they are spread on sheets, to dry in the sun. Put away then in bags, they give that suggestive intangible odor of dried rose-leaves that is so infinitely finer and more penetrating than any possible extract. A bushel of blossoms, well packed down, will make about a quart of rose-water, and I remember very well having made thirteen quarts one June from the sixty-foot hedge I speak of.

Altogether, a rose-water hedge is a delightful and easily obtained adjunct to the garden. Nothing is easier to get; in fact, in most places such a hedge may almost be had for the asking, as a little search is pretty sure to find some old garden overrun with the neglected bushes. They spread very rapidly, sending up endless suckers in every direction, if allowed to have their way; so a small start, with care and a little work, will make a hedge, and, when it buds and blooms and yields its fragrance, it will have doubly served its purpose of beauty and of use, to stay with us long after the summer days are gone.