

Plum Blossom,
Orchid, Bamboo and
Chrysanthemum

梅兰竹菊

王静◎编著



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从古至今,梅、兰、竹、菊始终是深受中国人喜爱的四种植物。人们不仅种植它们,还用诗文书画来赞美它们。

梅、兰、竹、菊都是中国土生土长的植物,都具有极强的观赏性。冬日可赏傲雪凌寒的梅花,春天可赏幽香沁人的兰花,秋季可赏傲霜绽放的菊花,而四时常青的则是翠竹。在中国的儒家文化中,“君子”为有道德品格的人,需要恪守节操,坚持自我不断完善,还要以自身的行为来宣示道



Since ancient times, plum blossom, orchid, bamboo and chrysanthemum have been deeply loved by the Chinese who not only plant them but employ poetry, calligraphy and painting to sing their praises.

Plum blossom, orchid, bamboo and chrysanthemum are all native to China and of high ornamental value. You can appreciate the plum blossom that defies the wintry snow, relish the intoxicating smell of the orchid flower in spring, gaze in awe at the chrysanthemum that blooms loftily against the bitter frost in the autumn sunshine, or





德的高尚，以此成为世人效法的楷模。“梅兰竹菊”的自然属性正契合了中国文化中的君子文化，因而被称为“四君子”。

认识了中国的梅、兰、竹、菊，进而就会理解中国人眼中“四君子”所蕴含的丰富涵义，也会了解中国传统文化的一部分精神内核。

simply abandon yourself in the evergreen bamboos. According to Chinese Confucian culture, a gentleman always distinguishes with moral integrity, seeks continuous self-improvement, shows his nobility by righteous behaviors, and thus becomes a shining model of decorum that the world will follow. Since the natural properties of plum blossom, orchid, bamboo and chrysanthemum exactly fit all the requirements of a gentleman, they are collectively referred to as the Four Gentlemen in Chinese culture.

A good knowledge of plum blossom, orchid, bamboo and chrysanthemum will further help to grasp the very rich meaning of the Four Gentlemen in the eyes of Chinese, and simultaneously grant you a glimpse of the spiritual core of the traditional Chinese culture.





说梅

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说梅

Ode to the Plum Blossom

梅是蔷薇科李属的落叶小乔木，别名又叫“春梅”、“干枝梅”，具有喜阳不耐积水的特性。梅是一种先开花后长叶的植物，花朵单生或双朵齐出，有五瓣，花色有白、红、淡绿、淡红等，以白色和淡红色为主，清香幽远。核果球形，未熟时为青色，成熟后呈黄色，味道极酸。梅树寿命很长，一般可活数十年，长寿的甚至可达千年以上。

Plum, also known as spring plum or dry plum, is a small deciduous tree of the genus *Prunus* in the Rosaceae family. It is a plant typical of sunny habitats but intolerant of excess water. Plum usually blossoms first and then comes into leaf. Its flowers can be single or in pairs, yet all have five petals, red, light green and mostly white or pale red in color, with a gentle fragrance. The drupe is round in shape, usually assumes green before maturity and then ripens into yellow and tastes quite acid. In general a plum can live as long as decades, and for those of unusual longevity even a thousand years cannot deprive their vigor of life.





> 梅之品赏

中国是梅的故乡，已有三千多年的栽培和应用历史。而首先得到先民们重视的不是梅的花朵，而是它的果实——梅子。梅子最早是被当做日常饮食的必需品来看待的，与盐同等重要，其作用大致相当于今天的醋。中国现存最早的史书《尚书》有云：“若作和羹，尔唯盐梅。”意即：商王武丁对宰相傅说（音“悦”）说，阁下的重要性，就好比做羹汤时用的盐和梅子那样。可见梅子在当时人们生活中起着十分重要的作用。

成书于春秋时期的诗歌总集《诗经》中有一首著名的情诗《摽有梅》，讲的是在暮春时节，梅子黄熟，纷纷坠落。一位姑娘见此情

> Appreciation of Plum Blossom

Native to China, plum has been planted and used for more than three thousand years. However, at the beginning the ancestors did not pay much attention to the plum blossom. Instead, it is the fruit that they relished, which was originally regarded as one of the necessities of the daily diet no less important than salt, and in role roughly equivalent to today's vinegar. As the *Classic of History*, the earliest extant Chinese book of its kind, records, "For a hearty soup, salt and plum is quite essential." In fact, this is exactly what King Wuding of the Shang Dynasty (1600 B.C.-1046 B.C.) used as an analogy to laud the importance of his Prime Minister Fu Yue (1335 B.C.-1246 B.C.). Hence we can see the crucial role that plum played in people's life at that time.

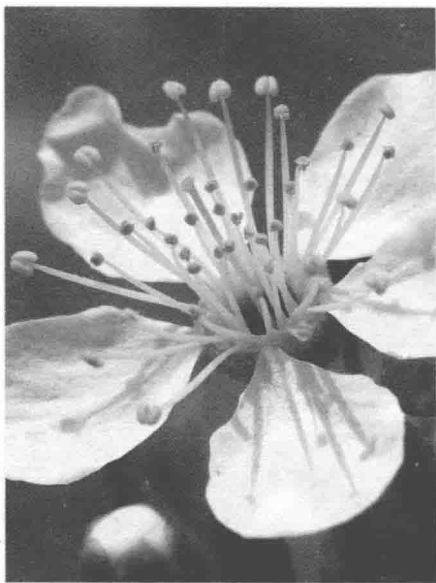


• 枝头的青梅

Greengages on the branch

景，联想到时光无情，自己青春流逝，却婚嫁无期，不禁以梅子起兴，唱出了对爱情的渴求。这首诗说明，当时在陕西地区梅树十分普遍，而且已经开始了引种野梅使之向家梅驯化的过程。在湖南长沙的马王堆汉墓的出土文物中，有一些陶罐里面放有完好的梅核和梅干，这说明在西汉初期，长江流域的人早已引种、栽培梅树，并利用梅子加工食品了。在栽种梅树、采摘加工梅子的同时，人们逐渐喜爱并欣

There is a famous love lyric called *Ripe Plums Are Falling* compiled in the *Book of Songs*, a collection of poems composed during the Spring and Autumn Period (770 B.C.-476 B.C.). It tells a story in late spring when a girl sees the plums ripen and fall, she cannot but think of the ruthless time that hastens the passage of youth whereas she herself remain unmarried. Thus by an explicit comparison with the falling plums, she sings the longing for love. Besides, this poem also shows plum trees were



• 盛开的梅花

Plum blossom in full bloom

赏梅花的色彩和姿态之美。而且在长期的栽培过程中，个别植株出现了复瓣、重瓣，奇异的花瓣或萼片，新奇的枝姿等，于是有人开始着手培育专供观赏的梅花新品种。从西汉时起，“花梅”开始逐渐从“果梅”中分出来，成为独立的一大品类。

今天，梅树经过长期的人工培植，已是拥有数百个品种的大家族，主要分“果梅”和“花梅”两大系统。果梅可分为青梅、白梅、

very common in Shaanxi Province at that time, and people already began to introduce and domesticate the wild plum. From tombs of the Western Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-25 A.D.) at Mawangdui in Changsha, Hunan Province, there have excavated some pots with intact plum stones and prunes in it, which indicates that in the early Western Han Dynasty, people along the Yangtze River had already begun to introduce and cultivate plum, and also use the fruit to process food. It might be at the same time that people gradually found delight in it and started to appreciate the color and elegant posture of the plum blossom. Moreover, in the long-term course of cultivation, some individual plum may turn out with double petals, strange sepals or novel postures, so people began to cultivate new varieties of ornamental plums deliberately. Since the Western Han Dynasty, the flowering plum cultivars had been separated from the fruiting ones and gradually developed into a large independent category.

After a long period of cultivation, now plum has become a large family with hundreds of cultivars. It can mainly divide into fruiting plum and flowering plum. The former may yield

寿阳公主的梅花妆

南北朝时期，赏梅、咏梅之风日盛。据史籍记载，南朝宋武帝的女儿寿阳公主有一日躺卧在皇宫含章殿的檐下小憩，恰好有一阵微风吹来，园中的梅花纷纷落下，其中有几朵碰巧落到了寿阳公主的额头上，在她前额上留下了梅花样的淡淡花痕，拂拭不去，使寿阳公主显得更加娇柔妩媚。皇后见了，十分喜欢。此后，爱美的寿阳公主便时常摘几片梅花贴在自己前额上。宫女们见了，个个称奇，并跟着仿效起来。不久，这种被人们称为“梅花妆”的妆饰方式便在宫中流传开来，并很快流传到民间，受到了女孩子们的喜爱。唐代诗人牛峤有“若缀寿阳公主额，六宫争肯学梅妆”的诗句，说的就是这个典故。

Plum Blossom Makeup of Princess Shouyang



• 明刻本《历代百美图》——寿阳公主
Princess Shouyang in the Ming Dynasty
block-printed *Beauties in All Ages*
(1368-1644)

During the Southern and Northern Dynasties (420-589), the fashion prevailed to appreciate and laud the plum blossom in poetic forms. According to historical records, one day Princess Shouyang, daughter of Emperor Wu of the Song Dynasty in the Southern Dynasties (363-422), was resting under the eaves of Hanzhang Palace in the imperial garden. Then a sudden breeze rustled the plum trees, and among all the fallen plum blossoms, several by chance drifted down onto her fair face, leaving a faint yet indelible floral imprint on her forehead that enhanced her beauty further. Since the queen was also very fond of it, from then on our young princess who loved beauty so much often picked a few plum blossoms to paste on her forehead. The court ladies were said to be so impressed, that they started decorating their own foreheads likewise. Very soon this cosmetic design known as plum blossom makeup became popular in the palace, then widespread among the folk and won great favor among girls. Niu Qiao, a Chinese poet in the Tang Dynasty (618-907) once alluded to this story in a poem, "As the plum blossom happened to decorate Princess Shouyang's forehead and add to her charm, all court ladies strived to learn this plum blossom makeup."





• 枝条扭曲的龙游梅 (图片提供: FOTOE)
Tortuous plum with twisted branches

红梅等，用于食用；而花梅则以观赏为主，生长姿态各不相同。按照梅枝的姿态不同，花梅又可分为直枝类、垂枝类和龙游类三种。直枝梅是中国梅花中最常见、品种最多、变化最广的一类；垂枝梅的枝条自然下垂或斜出，形成独立的伞状树态；而龙游梅的枝条扭曲，姿态奇特，富有韵味。

梅树喜欢在温暖而稍湿润的气候中生长，所以在长江流域及西南地区栽培极广。人们传统上认为梅

edible fruit, such as greengage, white plum, red plum, ect, whereas the latter is raised as ornamentals. And as its branch may assume gestures of all kinds, the flowering plum can further divide into upright plum, pendulous plum and tortuous plum. The upright plum is most commonly seen, most numerous in variety, and also allows a maximum of gestures. The pendulous plum, however, has the branches droop naturally and thus postures like an unfurled umbrella. The tortuous plum grows just as its name suggests, the twisted branches result in



垂枝梅花 (Weeping plum blossom)

Pavilion plum blossom



花能在冬天傲雪开放，其实它也是有极限温度的，一般不能抵抗低于零下 15°C — 20°C 的低温，开花至少也需要平均气温达到 6°C — 7°C 。

由于梅花忍耐严寒、傲雪早发，具有一种不屈不挠的斗争精神，中国古代文人爱梅、咏梅、画梅，爱梅花的风姿，更希望能够成为像梅花一样高洁的人。久而久之，赏梅还形成了具体的审美标准，主要是观梅花之色、品梅花之香、赏梅花之姿。

peculiar poses yet simultaneously retain a lingering charm.

Plum trees grow best in a warm and slightly humid climate, so people usually cultivate them around the Yangtze River and in the southwest of China. Although tradition has it that the plum can blossom defying cold and snow, still the plant has its own temperature range. Generally it cannot tolerate temperature lower than minus 15°C — 20°C (59°F — 68°F), whereas its flowering needs an average temperature up to at least 6°C — 7°C (42.8°F — 44.6°F).



• 直枝梅花中的玉蝶梅
Upright jade butterfly plum blossom

青梅煮酒论英雄

“曹操煮酒论英雄”的故事出自古典小说《三国演义》第二十一回。东汉末年，丞相曹操挟天子以令诸侯，势力很大。而刘备虽为皇室之后，却势单力薄。他为防曹操谋害，整日在住处后园种菜，韬光养晦。一天，曹操派人请刘备一起饮酒，二人以青梅下酒，谈论起“当今天下谁可称为英雄”的话题。刘备先后提出几位当时势力较大的地方军阀，曹操认为他们都虚有其表，不是真正的英雄。最后，曹操说：“今天下英雄，惟使君与操耳！”（现在天下的英雄，只有你和我了！）刘备一听，吃了一惊，手中的筷子也不觉掉在地下。正巧这时突然天降大雨，雷声大作，刘备急忙低下身拾起筷子，并说是因为被雷声吓到才掉了筷子，巧妙地掩饰了内心的惊惶。通过这次酒局，曹操的傲视群雄之态、雄霸天下之志表露无遗。而刘备能够随机应变、进退自如，也表现出了一世豪杰所应有的机智与城府。

Cao Cao and Liu Bei Judging the Heroes of the Age over Hot Plum Wine



• 魏太祖曹操像

Portrait of Cao Cao, Emperor Taizu of the State Wei (155-220)

This story is taken from Chapter 21 in the classical novel *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. In the late Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220), Cao Cao the Prime Minister usurped the imperial power, ordered the feudal lords about in his name, and greatly extended his sphere of influence. Liu Bei however, though descended from the royal family, turned out rather powerless. In order to defend against Cao Cao's sinister design, he drew in his claws, kept a low profile, and devoted himself to gardening in his residence. One day, Cao Cao invited Liu Bei for a drinking. Over the plum and wine, they began to talk about the heroes of the age. Liu Bei proposed several local warlords of enormous influence at their times, but Cao Cao thought that they were only impressive in appearance and hence not real heroes. Finally Cao Cao pointed out, "The only heroes in the world are you and I." Liu Bei was stunned at the words, his chopsticks rattling to the floor. And just at that moment the storm burst with a tremendous peal of thunder and rush of rain, so

he quickly stooped down to pick up the chopsticks, excusing that they were dropped because of the shock of thunder, and thus skillfully covering up his inner panic. This meeting fully exposed Cao Cao's self-esteem over all rivals and his ambition to dominate the world. Liu Bei's witty response to circumstances also revealed the utmost tact and shrewdness of a real hero.



• 粉红色的梅花
Pink plum blossom



• 雪中红梅 (图片提供: FOTOE)
Red plum blossom in the snow