Chronological History and Origins of the Language of Flowers

- **Ancient Egyptians**
  - Egyptians believed that divine power was contained within the scent of a flower
  - Figures on frescoes enjoyed the fragrance of blue water lilies
- **Romans**
  - Feared that heady scents of flowers could obscure their mind and impair their judgement
- **Greeks**
  - Mythological figures were used in an attempt to explain the beauty of flowers
  - Different plants were associated with individual gods and their origins were sometimes explained by tales of humans being transformed into plants
  - They made an attempt at recording the plant world systematically and describing their finds.
- **Sixth century BC**
  - The custom of wearing garlands became popular
  - The flowers and leaves used were an indication of the type of occasion.
- **Imperial Rome**
  - Made extravagant use of flowers. They ‘carpeted’ whole rooms with rose petals or fragrant saffron crocuses
- **Fall of Roman Empire around 550**
  - Floral art and display disappeared from Europe for several centuries
  - Early Christians regarded flowers and floral paintings with great suspicion, seeing them as symbols of a ‘decadent’ pagan culture
- **800**
  - Charlemagne grew medicinal plants, fruits and vegetables
  - The culture of flowers, symbolism of flowers and the language of flowers developed in quick succession
  - Foundation of European horticulture created
- **13th century**
  - *Romance of the Rose* by author Guillaume de Lorris created the romance genre of the Middle Ages
  - He wrote dreamy tales in which flowers became the messengers of feelings
- **From 1556 onwards**
  - The science of botany broke away from medicine
  - New flowers were introduced to the public in countless books.

- **Victorian Era 1820 – 1880**
  - Proclaiming feelings in public was considered socially taboo, so the Victorians expressed intimacy through flowers.

Compiled by Layce Gebhard, Rutgers Master Gardener of Hunterdon County
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Flower</th>
<th>Meanings</th>
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| January   | Carnation    | Pink – Maternal love
White – Living for love
Red – Deep pure love
Striped – Refusal |
| March     | Daffodil     | Respect, regard
Renewal of life
Beginning of a new season
Gracefulness |
| May       | Lily         | Majesty
Purity
A symbol of excellence
Represents perfection
Symbol of ideal womanhood |
| July      | Delphinium   | Sweetness
Beauty
Well-being
Return of a friend is desired |
| September | Forget-Me-Not| Do not forget me!
True love
Hope
Remembrance |
| November  | Chrysanthemum| Optimism, long life, joy
Joviality, mirth
Red – I love you
White – Truth
Yellow – Cheerfulness |
| October   | Marigold     | Health
Joy
Affection
Remembrance
Constancy |
| December  | Poinsettia   | Poinsettia – Be of good cheer
Holly
Good will
Domestic happiness |
|           | & Holly      |                                                                          |