

Rosemary - "Dew of the Sea" (*Rosmarinus officinalis*)

Description:

- A woody, tender perennial herb with fragrant, needle-like leaves and white, pink, purple, or blue flowers, native to the Mediterranean region.
- It is a member of the mint family Lamiaceae. The name "rosemary" derives from Latin *ros marinus* ("dew of the sea").
- Reasonably hardy in zones 8 or higher, it is typically grown as an annual in Central Virginia or brought indoors over the winter. It can withstand droughts, surviving a severe lack of water for lengthy periods once established. Forms range from upright to trailing.



History:

- Records of rosemary in herb gardens go back to ancient times. Don Quixote (Part One, Chapter XVII) mixes it in his recipe of the balm, fierabras. In Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Ophelia says, "There's rosemary, that's for remembrance."¹
- In the New World, Rosemary is known to have been cultivated in colonial gardens as early as the 1650s. However, an English visitor to Massachusetts in the 1670s noted that Rosemary was one of several plants from Europe that did not seem to 'thrive here'.

Uses:

- **Landscaping:** Rosemary is used as an ornamental plant in gardens and for xeriscape landscaping. It is considered easy to grow and pest-resistant. It can be pruned into formal shapes and low hedges. It is easily grown in pots.
- **Cooking:** Leaves can be used as an astringent flavoring in foods, such as stuffing and roast lamb, pork, chicken, and turkey. Herbal tea can be made from the leaves. When roasted with meats or vegetables, the leaves impart a mustard-like aroma. Infused oils are sometimes made as Rosemary extract has been shown to improve the shelf life and heat stability of omega-3 rich oils which are prone to rancidity.
- **Medicinal effects being studied:**
 - Laboratory studies have shown rosemary to be rich in antioxidants, which play an important role in neutralizing harmful particles called free radicals.
 - According to research outlined in [Therapeutic Advances in Psychopharmacology](#), the aroma from rosemary can improve a person's concentration, performance, speed, and accuracy and, to a lesser extent, their mood.
 - Scientists have found that rosemary may also be good for your brain. Rosemary contains an ingredient called carnosic acid, which can fight off damage by free radicals in the brain. Some studies in rats have identified that rosemary might be useful for people who have experienced a [stroke](#).

- Research published in *Oncology Reports* found that "crude ethanolic rosemary extract (RO)" slowed the spread of human leukemia and breast carcinoma cells."
- Another study, published in *Bioscience, Biotechnology and Biochemistry*, concluded that rosemary might be useful as an anti-inflammatory and anti-tumor agent.
- Also, a report published in the *Journal of Food Science* revealed that adding rosemary extract to ground beef reduces the formation of cancer-causing agents that can develop during cooking.
- A study published in the journal *Investigative Ophthalmology & Visual Science*, led by Dr. Stuart A. Lipton, Ph.D. and colleagues at Sanford-Burnham Medical Research Institute, revealed that a carnosic acid, which is a major component of rosemary, can significantly promote eye health.

Cautions:

- Very high doses of Rosemary may cause vomiting, coma, and pulmonary edema. According to Penn State Hershey Medical Center total daily intake should not exceed 4 to 6 grams of the dried herb (approximately 1.5 tbsp) and rosemary oil should never be taken orally.
 - High doses of rosemary may cause miscarriage; therefore it is not advisable for pregnant women to take any supplemental rosemary.
 - Rosemary also has several drug interactions. Rosemary can affect the activity of some medications, including Anticoagulants, ACE inhibitors, Diuretics, and Lithium. Specifically, Rosemary can act as a diuretic and cause lithium to reach toxic levels in the body.
- **Other:** Rosemary can also be burnt as incense, and used in shampoos and cleaning products.

Cultivation:

Rosemary grows on loam soil with good drainage in an open, sunny position. It will not withstand waterlogging and some varieties are susceptible to frost. It grows best in neutral conditions (approximately pH 6.5 – 7) with average fertility. It can be propagated from an existing plant by clipping a shoot (from a soft new growth) 4–6 in long, stripping a few leaves from the bottom, and planting it directly into soil.

- **Recommended cultivars:**
 - **‘Arp’** - Grey-green foliage. One of the more cold-tolerant varieties to perhaps to zone 6.
 - **‘Salem’** – Also fairly cold tolerant (to zone 7).
 - **‘Gorizia’** – Tall upright form, large leaves, light blue flowers.
 - **‘Blue Rain’** – Trailing variety, light blue flowers.
 - **‘Tuscan Blue’** – Upright form, mild flavor.
 - **‘Huntington Carpet’** – Trailing form, deep blue foliage.

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