



## ROSEMARY – HERB OF THE YEAR

Each year, the International Herb Society chooses one herb to honor as herb of the year. This year's selection is rosemary. Long known as the herb of remembrance, rosemary symbolizes loyalty and friendship, and has traditionally been associated with both weddings and funerals. It has been used in pest control, and throughout much of history was thought to be the cure for many ills, ranging from gout to the plague. Today its medicinal uses are more limited. It is most commonly grown as a culinary herb, and it is valued for its pungent, pine-like scent.

Rosemary is also an attractive plant that combines well with other herbs and with garden ornamentals, planted in the border or in containers.

Rosemary is an evergreen perennial shrub native to the Mediterranean region, Portugal and Spain. It has silvery, needle-like foliage and delicate flowers. Blue, pink or white varieties are available, and they range in habit from creeping to mounding to upright. Although it can grow quite large in warmer regions, rosemary stays considerably smaller here, with most varieties growing less than two feet tall or

wide. In cold winter areas it is considered a tender perennial, not hardy enough to leave outside, but it can be brought inside to a sunny window and overwintered successfully.



Rosemary is very versatile as a culinary herb, and both the leaves and the flowers are edible. Crush the leaves and sprinkle them over roast chicken, pork or lamb for a wonderful flavor and aroma. Use rosemary to make herb butters or mix it into fresh salads. Add to potato dishes, soups or stews, and bake it into bread. Steep it in vinegar or olive oil and add it to salad dressings or use as a marinade for meats or vegetables. On the outdoor grill, enhance the flavor of meats and vegetables by adding a few stems to the coals near the end of the cooking period. Use sprigs of leaves or flowers as an

attractive, edible garnish.

Also grow rosemary for its marvelous aroma. After the leaves are stripped, toss the stems in the fireplace to fill the house with a delightful pine-scented perfume. Add some leaves or flowers to potpourri as well, and keep a sprig or two in the sweater drawer to repel moths. Weave branches into wreaths or garlands as a silvery, fragrant base. Rosemary also stimulates the circulation. Add some to the bath water for a revitalizing soak.

Plant rosemary in the herb garden or mix it with perennials and annuals in the border, where its silvery, needle-like foliage will provide an interesting color and textural contrast. It works particularly well in containers, used alone or mixed with other plants, and it is nice to grow on or near a patio or deck where it is easy to harvest and where its pungent scent can be enjoyed.

Rosemary responds well to pruning, and upright varieties are easy to train into topiaries. Mounding types can be trained into small hedges or borders in the herb garden or flower border. Try the creeping varieties in hanging baskets or let them

tumble over rock walls. Plant especially good. When it is time leaves should be stripped off the them to soften the edges of a to water, do so thoroughly, but branches before storing. walk, where the occasional then let the soil dry out before brush by the passerby will re- watering again. Prune out dead lease their delightful fragrance. stems and to shape in spring, and again after flowering.

Grow rosemary in a sunny loca- tion in very well drained soil. Rosemary can be harvested at Supplemental feedings are rarely any time, although the oils are needed unless the soil is very their strongest just before infertile. For container planting, flowering. It is excellent when be sure to use a light, peat- used fresh, but is also good based mix that is formulated for dried or frozen. Keep in mind, pots. Opt for one with lot of ag- though, that this is a strong- gregate for drainage—look for flavored herb, and its flavor will perlite, bark or Styrofoam. Be intensify when it is dried or fro- sure to choose a container that zen. Rosemary sprigs can be has large drainage holes. Clay or frozen whole and the leaves other porous containers are stripped off as needed. Dried

