

Shrub Common & Scientific Name: Rosemary; *rosmarinus officinalis*; Lamiaceae Family, Evergreen shrub

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Varieties:

Upright:

- 'Arp', 4'h x 4'w, hardiest to -10F, discovered in Arp, TX, medium blue flowers
- 'Blue Spires', 5-6'h x 5-6'w, excellent for hedge, good for cooking
- 'Golden Rain', ('Joyce deBaggio'), 2-3'hx2-3'w, golden leaves with/dark vein
- 'Gorizia,' 4-5'h x 4-5'w, reddish brown stems, leaves 2" long and broader than most
- 'Miss Jessup's Upright', 4'h x 2/w, thin leaves on slender stems, pale violet
- 'Tuscan Blue', originally brought to England from Tuscany, 6-7'h x 2'w, deep Violet-blue flowers. Some nurseries sell "Blue Spires" under this name.

Semiupright:

- 'Albus', 6' x 6', white flowers veined in pale lavender, hardy to 0F
- 'Benenden Blue', ('Balsam'), 3'h x 4'w pine fragrance, bitter flavoring with turpentine hint.
- 'Hill Hardy', 5' x 5', compact, stiff foliage, light blue flowers, hardy.

Prostrate:

- 'Collingwood Ingram', 2.5'h x 4'w, not good for cooking, piny flavor, deep blue.
- 'Huntington Carpet' ('Huntington Blue') 1.5'h spreads quickly, best variety for ground or bank cover. Pale blue flowers.
- 'Ken Taylor', sport of 'Collingwood Ingram', has same deep blue flower but is lower growing w/greater tendency to trail.
- 'Severn Sea', 1.5'h trail widely, one of the cold hardiest trailers, sky blue flowers.

Height/Width: Depending on variety, from 8-12" to 6' tall and from 14-18" to 4-6' wide. USDA zones 8-10, Sunset zones 4-24

History/Lore: Rosemary is an evergreen native from Mediterranean area growing wild on rocky hillsides. Its genus name means "dew of the sea". It is tolerant to salt spray. It is known as the "herb of remembrance" and is thought to strengthen ones memory. A line in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Ophelia says "There's rosemary, that's for remembrance". Italians tossed rosemary springs onto the grave as a symbolic gesture to remember the life of the deceased. Greek scholars placed rosemary wreaths on their heads to stimulate their brains and aid memory before exams. It is also considered an herb of love, loyalty, and friendship. One legend claims that rosemary got its blue flowers when the Virgin Mary hung her cloak on a rosemary bush to dry.

How to Propagate: From stem cuttings at any stage during the year. Plants readily root wherever the branches touch the ground (layering). If plant becomes woody or bare at the center, may cut back selected branches by half to encourage new growth. But be sure

to cut into leafy wood as plant will not regrow from bare wood. Tip-pinching is a good way to control shape and encourage bushy growth.

Exposure Needs: Full sun but will tolerate light shade. Requires excellent drainage. Somewhat drought tolerant, but likes an occasional “misting”.

Soil Type: Likes sandy or chalky, slightly alkaline soil. Optimum pH is 6.8 but will tolerate a range from 5-8. Commercial potting soil with additional perlite for drainage may be used when growing in pots.

Culture: Grows best in full sun but will tolerate partial shade. Like it's native Mediterranean area, it thrives on well-drained soil and does not tolerate “wet feet”. Tip-prune new plants to shape and encourage bushy growth. Upright varieties (4-5' h x 3-4' w) maybe pruned into hedges. Prostrate varieties perform well as ground covers, or hanging over rocky walls or even as hanging potted plants. The 1" long resinous, aromatic leaves (strong, piney fragrance) grow thickly along the stems. Leaf color ranges from dark green or grey-green to golden above and grayish white beneath. Leaves of most creepers are about half inch shorter than those of uprights and much glossier. Tiny flowers range in color from traditional blue to pin, white and lavender. It generally flowers in spring, but some prostrate varieties can bloom continuously throughout the year. Fertilize sparingly; avoid it until later winter, when new growth begins and longer day length enable plants to utilize added nutrients.

Disease or insect problems: Rarely suffer from any pest or diseases, especially outdoors. When planted in pots indoors, they can occasionally be attacked by scale, aphids, mealy bugs, spittlebugs, thrips, spider mites, and white fly. In humid conditions, fungal diseases can be a problem such as powdery mildew, botrytis, and rhizoctonia.

Plant Interest:

Cooking- Rosemary has been used as a culinary herb for centuries in many different cultures. Flowers can be added to dishes and salads to add color and flavor. Dark green, pine-like needles are highly aromatic and their addition adds robust flavor and aroma to dishes. They make good additions to soups, sauces, vegetables, and meat. The flavor pairs especially well with poultry, beef, lamb, cheese, and eggs. This is a good use for tip-prunings. Even the striped stems may be used as a stick for kebab meat or to brush on a marinade to add flavor.

Horticulture- Planted in the garden, rosemary is purported to keep cabbage butterflies away. It is seen frequently pruned into topiary shapes, like lollipop-shaped hearts, or circles. Especially at winter time, Christmas tree topiaries take advantage of their natural, pine fragrance of the rosemary plant. Some creeping forms have twisting, swirling branches good for bonsai specimens.

Medicinal- The English herbalist Nicholas Culpepper wrote about rosemary's memory properties in his 1653 *Complete Herbal*. In Germany, rosemary is approved for use in digestive complaints. Today, research is being done on rosemary's antioxidant properties

and their effect on the brain (remembrance). Rosemary incense was burned to fumigate courtrooms in seventeenth century France and England as well as during WWII in French hospitals, desperate for supplies. Rosemary oil is used in cosmetics, soaps, and deodorants, hair tonics, and other health care products. It was reportedly first distilled by Raymundus Lillus about 1330 AD. It has antifungal and antiviral properties as well as used externally to relieve acne, oily skin, dandruff, and eczema.

Crafts- Potpourris, wreaths, mantel decoration, sleep pillows, dyes for yarn and fabric.