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How to Grow Rosemary Plants: The Complete Guide



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Planting, Growing, and Harvesting Rosemary Plants

By [Catherine Boeckmann](#)
Last Updated: April 24, 2025



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Rosemary is an attractive perennial shrub with fragrant leaves. It’s also a popular culinary herb with a wonderful aroma and piney taste, which goes well with meat, soups, and potatoes. Learn how to plant, grow, prune, and harvest rosemary correctly!

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About Rosemary

Rosemary (*Salvia rosmarinus*) is a compact small to medium-sized woody shrub; there's also a trailing variety. This shrubby herb is a type of sage and grows well with other Mediterranean herbs, such as lavender and [thyme](#). It has lovely blue flowers as well, attracting pollinators!

BUY SEEDS NOW

Drought-tolerant, rosemary grows best in warm areas, similar to its native shores of the Mediterranean Sea. In these conditions, rosemary can grow into a shrub 5 to 10 feet in height. Rosemary grows so vigorously in ideal conditions that it needs yearly pruning to keep it bushy.

This herb can be grown in the ground or in a pot. If you live in [Zones 7 and warmer](#), it grows easily as a perennial evergreen shrub that lives for many years. Rosemary is hardy down to 15 to 23°F (-10 to -5°C), so it may need win-

ter protection. In colder areas, rosemary should be grown in a pot and brought indoors for the winter.

When growing rosemary as a [culinary herb](#), it's best to harvest it in the spring and summer when it's actively putting on new growth. Rosemary is a compact woody shrub. While all the leaves are technically edible, we usually only eat the tender leaves that form at the tips of new branches.

Read Next

- [A How-to Guide: Companion Planting with Herbs](#)
- [How to Care for Lavender in Winter](#)
- [Indoor Herb Garden: How to Get Started!](#)

PLANTING

Plant in full sun in fast-draining soil; rosemary won't tolerate being constantly wet. Ideally, the soil should be

relatively fertile (mix in compost prior to planting to increase nutrient levels).

When to Plant Rosemary

- Plant rosemary in spring well after the frosts have passed, once the soil is starting to warm up (around 70°F or 21°C). In warmer climates, plant in spring or fall.
- Most gardeners start rosemary from young plants bought at a nursery. This plant does not germinate easily from seed and seedlings are slow to grow.
- However, if you have access to an established rosemary plant, rosemary is very easily started from cuttings.
- If you wish to grow from seed indoors, just be aware it will take several years to grow the plant large enough to start harvesting.
- Start seeds or cuttings indoors 8 to 10 weeks before the last spring frost. ([See your local frost dates.](#))

How to Plant Rosemary

- Rosemary grows well in the ground or in containers. However, it does not like wet roots, so if your soil is heavy or wet, plant it in a pot or a raised bed. Also, rosemary does not transplant well from ground to container, so start in a pot if you plan to bring it inside (especially in colder climates).
- Before planting in the ground, mix in several inches of organic matter, such as compost, to create nutritious, fertile soil.
- In a pot, use a container mix, as rosemary needs a lighter-weight soil mix.
- Space starter plants 2 to 3 feet apart; rosemary does not like being crowded.
- If starting seeds or cuttings indoors, keep the soil moist while seeds germinate and roots develop. Seeds can take a long time to germinate (2 to 3 weeks), so don't give up right away! Plant outside once the plant is 4 inches tall.



GROWING

- Keep the soil uniformly moist, allowing it to dry out between waterings. Be consistent; be careful not to overwater.
- Rosemary shrubs growing in the ground do not need fertilizer, but a potted plant will run out of nutrition more quickly, so feed with an all-purpose balanced fertilizer after flowering.
- Mulch the shrubs to keep plants insulated in winter, but keep mulch away from the crown of the plant to avoid rotting.
- Prune annually before new growth begins in the spring, and prune out dead wood. Don't prune the rosemary too heavily.

- If you leave rosemary unpruned, it can get very woody, leggy, and straggly. After about 5 years, it's best to replace it.
- Be sure to get cuttings or divide the plant for next season if it won't survive winter in your area.
- During the winter, bring potted rosemary plants inside. [Learn how to overwinter rosemary indoors.](#)



HARVESTING

- While rosemary is an evergreen that can be harvested at any time, it's best to harvest young stems and leaves for the freshest taste. The plant puts on soft new tips in the spring and summer.

- The leaves and stems get tougher and more woody as they age. The older tips are best for infusing things with flavor or scent, rather than eating. Try making rosemary vinegar!
- Even the flowers are edible, with a slightly sweeter flavor! Add to salads or dishes as a garnish.
- Snip off stems, while keeping an eye on maintaining an attractive shape to the plant. Don't harvest more than a third of the rosemary at any one time.
- To dry rosemary, hang it upside down in bunches to dry in a dark, warm place. Once stems are dry, strip the leaves from them and store in a sealed jar.

GARDENING PRODUCTS



PESTS/DISEASES

- Aerial blight
- Bacterial leaf spots
- Several types of root rot

WIT AND WISDOM

- In the garden, plant rosemary near beans, cabbage, carrots, and sage. Learn more about [companion planting with herbs](#).
- Rosemary tea is said to enhance one's memory. Wear a sprig of rose-

mary in your hair to improve
your memory.

- In the language of flowers, rosemary symbolizes remembrance.
- A sprig of lavender or rosemary under your ironing board cover will release its fragrance with the heat.

The Many Uses of Rosemary

Enjoy this video showing the rosemary plant—and its many uses as a helper in the garden, kitchen, and healing home!

...A The many uses of rosemary



RECIPES

**ROSEMARY CHICKEN WITH
SPINACH**

**CORNBREAD WITH PINE NUTS
AND ROSEMARY**

**ROASTED PORK TENDERLOIN
WITH GARLIC AND ROSEMARY**

ROSEMARY VINEGAR

COOKING NOTES

Rosemary is wonderful with roast lamb, pork, chicken, pasta, stews, soups, vegetables (such as carrots), and sauces.

After drying, rosemary makes a lovely tea to aid digestion. You can also use it to infuse vinegar or olive oil or use it to flavor butter.

HERBS

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Catherine Boeckmann



Catherine Boeckmann loves nature, stargazing, and gardening so it's not surprising that she and The Old Farmer's Almanac found each other. She leads digital content for the Almanac website, and is also a certified master gardener in the state of Indiana. [Read More from Catherine Boeckmann](#)

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COMMENTS

ADD A COMMENT

Anne (not verified)10 months 1 week ago

Home Depot usually sells Rosemary +
Lavender plants~:)

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REPLY

Cathy (not verified) 1 year 5 months ago
For many years I have had a rosemary plant in a pot about 12 inches across at the top, and it is now almost 2 feet tall. I bring it inside in the fall and out on the porch in the spring, and it is doing great and provides as needed. :)

REPLY

Jennifer Keating 1 year 5 months ago
That is fantastic, great job!!

REPLY

Anne (not verified) 1 year 5 months ago
Great idea ! A sprig of lavender or rosemary under your ironing board cover will release its fragrance with the heat. Home Depot is selling Rosemary plants as Christmas trees;

very attractive; those plants would be best left in pots for Conn. winter; then brought outside for Spring~

REPLY

Pam (not verified) 1 year 10 months ago

Helpful information, but please correct grammatical errors and proofread before publishing future articles. Thank you.

REPLY

Lisa May (not verified) 3 years ago

Hi I have a very large Rosemary plant outside and right now it looks like it is dying there is only a little green left. Are they supposed to look like this at this time of year? Should I cut it back to see if it gets better?

REPLY

Virginia (not verified) 1 year 1

month ago

It is showing yellow stems

I have it in a pot

REPLY

Cynthia (not verified) 2 years 7

months ago

Should I cut it back to the route

or cut all and dry b4 I put it in a

bag?

REPLY

The Editors 3 years ago

Hi Lisa, Thanks for writing in.

Rosemary is a plant that thrives in a Mediterranean-like climate and does not do well in locations with cold winters. It is not uncommon for its branches to appear dead in early spring. Since there is a little green remaining, that is a positive

sign. To determine if a branch is dead, scrape the bark of a few stems. If the stem is green underneath, new growth is possible. If it is brown, removal is necessary. If all branches are brown underneath the bark, it is best to remove and get a new plant.

REPLY

Jillian M Chapman (not verified) 3 years

12 months ago

I planted seeds, many knowing germination can be low, and I have about 25 seedlings in a 7in diameter pot! They have just started their second set of leaves. Some are spindly-lanky some have nice thick stems. I have been leaving them outside all the time and they seem to be loving this spring in Maryland. I am wondering at what point to I thin them? Do I have to thin them? Amazing that this isn't info I could find on the internet! Thanks in advance!

REPLY

MORE COMMENTS

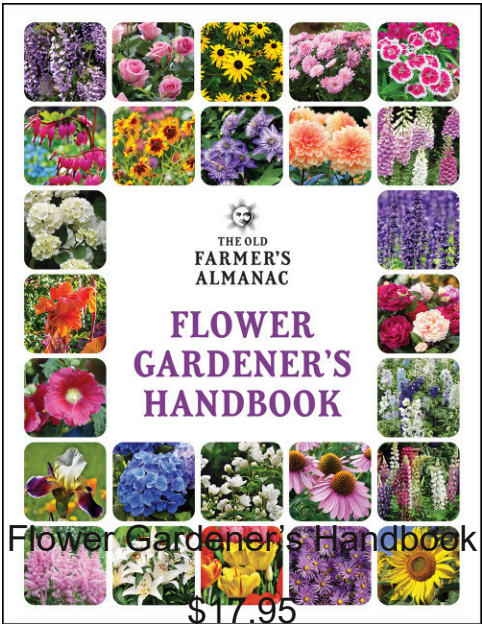
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