

GARDENING

THE DICKSON WAY



Rosemary for Remembrance

Joann Hayes Anderson

Rosemary is a beautiful herb. It belongs in every herb garden, but it can be mixed with other perennials and shrubs. It should be planted in a spot where it can be seen and touched often. Instant aroma-therapy all year long, because it's evergreen.

Known mostly as a seasoning herb, rosemary is truly multi-functional. It's used in making soaps and cosmetics. The leaves produce a yellow-green dye. Having the name officinalis designates the plant was listed in the pharmacopeia. It's also used to deter fleas, flies, ticks, and mosquitoes.

If grown in a pot and left outside, protection will be needed to keep the roots from freezing. In-ground plants need to be planted in a sunny, very well-drained spot protected from north winds. Add gravel or coarse sand to the soil before planting. Rosemary is a Mediterranean herb, and the more it feels at home, the longer it will live. Five years is about as long as I can keep a plant before it dies, and that would be the variety 'Arp'. 'Hill Hardy' has done well for me here, and it is a prettier plant than 'Arp'. My advice is to try different varieties. However, 'Arp' is drought tolerant, and it stands up to a harsh winter better than any other variety. The species, Rosemary officinalis, is a good plant to grow inside in winter if you have the right environment for it. With that pine needle scent, it will make a perfect little Christmas topiary.

Rosemary, traditionally the herb of love, friendship, and remembrance. One species, *Rosmarinus officinalis*, but oh, so many varieties. In my opinion, Rosemary is the herb of the month for December – every year! It just has a Christmas attitude. There are a number of legends associated with the plant. I especially like the story of how the rosemary flowers were always white until the Virgin Mary threw her wet, blue cloak over a rosemary bush to dry, causing the flowers to turn blue and remain so to the present. In ancient times, clothes and linens were stored with sprigs of rosemary. To be free of evil dreams, one could sleep on rosemary scented linens so the story went. Rosemary is known to deter insects.

This time of year, we see rosemary plants pruned into topiary shapes that look like little Christmas trees. Rosemary is one of those plants that can just easily be pruned into various shapes. It's so tempting to give these rosemary plants as gifts, and they have such a wonderful aroma. Just make sure the plant is in good condition, because if it's not thriving now, it won't ever be. I have decided that they will always last longer than cut flowers. And, remember to pass along the message that the gift may be short-lived, and that's okay. If properly cared for, rosemary stands a good chance of surviving the winter indoors. A sunny, cool room is required! Water sparingly. Don't let the soil get too dry, and it can't be too wet. That's the hard part. The roots can rot if they stand in water.

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY GARDENING



Gardening Partners is a non-profit founded in 2003 to serve Dickson County with gardening education and advice.

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