

Living Herbs

Description

Rosemary Upright
Rosmarinus Officinalis
Family: Lamiaceae

Rosemary Upright is a perennial shrub with upright woody stems that bear narrow leathery leaves up to 4cm long. They're similar to pine-needles with a strong pine-like aroma, shiny dark green surfaces and white felt coated underside with marked mid vein, in frequent irregular order. A group of small blue lip-shaped flowers forms at its tip. It grows up to 1.5m tall and spreads over 1m in diameter.

Growing Tips

It is very hardy and drought resistant and likes well-drained soil in a sunny position. For protection in winter it is best grown against a North-facing wall. Its leaves or small twigs can be picked all year round but do not harvest more than 20% of the plant volume. For best results replace every 5-6 years and can be propagated from cuttings. Rosemary Upright is a low maintenance plant.

Parts Used

Leaves

Uses

Its leaves are delicious fresh or dried and are great in roast lamb and mutton, beef and chicken, potato and vegetable dishes, fish, rice, salads, vinegars and oils, as well as fruit drinks. Its antibacterial and antioxidant quality also makes it a useful ingredient in marinades as it helps to preserve the food or burning a twig on a barbecue or in a fireplace spreads a nice smell in the surrounding area.

Infused rosemary oil is frequently used in aromatherapy and cosmetics, in perfumes and as air freshener and a purifier. It also has anti-inflammatory and invigorating effects and can be used diluted in some carrier oil, to treat headaches and stomach upsets.

An infusion used as a hair rinse will put shine into dark hair. It is also good for bad breath, flatulence and to improve memory and can be used as a facial steam to invigorate and cleanse the skin.

Origin & History

Rosemary originates in the Mediterranean region, Southern France, Sicily, Corsica, Spain, Portugal, Greece and Turkey, and symbolizes fidelity and remembrance. The Latin name means 'sea-dew' which refers to either the fact that it grows along the shore of the Mediterranean and can exist on the sea breeze alone, or to its appearance when in flower, a green shrub covered in blue dew.

Legend tells that the flower used to be white until the Virgin Mary used one of the shrubs to hide behind from her pursuers, and in doing so threw her blue cloak over the plant and when she removed the cloak the flowers had turned blue in her honour. It also says that the plant grows for 33 years, the lifespan of Christ, then dies, and never rises over 1.8m tall, so as to not be taller than Jesus.

New Zealand and Australian soldiers pin it on their shirts on ANZAC day.

Its cleansing powers were used during the plague where people would wear pouches filled with Rosemary leaves through which to breathe so as to avoid contamination.

Rosemary, Upright

