

## Caring for Your Rosemary Tree

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**R**osemary is a popular herb used in cooking, but even if you never use a sprig of it on lamb or chicken, rosemary is a wonderful addition to any garden. This Mediterranean favorite is fragrant, hardy, and pest- and disease-free. Plant it where you can occasionally run your fingers through it to enjoy its wonderful scent.

Rosemary can be used as a specimen plant, a feature in the herb garden, or an informal hedge. Rosemary is a good companion to other perennials, including roses and salvias. There are numerous varieties of rosemary: some are upright; others are prostrate or trailing; several are known for their lovely pale blue blossoms.

Rosemary “trees” or topiaries have become a popular holiday gift or decoration in recent years. These trees can be kept for many years with minimal attention and care.

Usually, a nursery-grown rosemary tree is a large plant in a relatively small container when it is purchased. Since rosemary sends out lots of tiny hair-like roots, there is probably a pretty good size root mass in the container without much soil to absorb water.

Although rosemary is known to be drought tolerant, it does need sufficient moisture in order to thrive. Rosemary does not exhibit the usual signs of water-stress seen in other plants. A rosemary plant can easily be past salvaging before the signs of inadequate watering are noticed. Pay close attention to the watering needs of your plant until you have time to repot it or plant it in a garden bed.

If at all possible, replant your tree into a larger pot as soon as possible. Select a pot that is two to four inches wider and deeper than the original container. Use a lightweight, fast-draining potting mix, and plant your new rosemary so that the top of the root ball is at the same level as the surrounding potting mix. Water the plant thoroughly every week.

If you are keeping your plant in the house for the holidays, make sure you have a tray underneath the container to catch water that drains out. Keep the container near a bright window and do not expose it to the drying heat of heaters or air registers.

You can plant your rosemary tree outside in full sun either immediately after you receive it or after the holidays. Saturate the plant completely before planting to reduce transplant stress. Prepare a hole in a sunny location and in well-drained soil. Water the plant well and apply mulch after planting.



If you must keep the rosemary in its nursery container for a while, make sure you monitor the soil moisture. You may need to apply water more often than once a week until you have time to repot or plant it. Check the moisture of the root ball by sticking your index finger an inch below soil level. If the soil is dry, it is time to water, but do not allow the plant to sit in water.



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