

Rosemary “Dew of the Sea”

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Would you like an attractive, easy to grow, low care plant in your garden? Look no further than Rosemary, *Rosmarinus officinalis*. The genus name means dew of the sea, reflecting the plant’s native habitat on seaside cliffs in the Mediterranean region. It thrives in most areas of California, including western El Dorado County. Rosemary tolerates heat and sun, chilly temperatures down to 20F, and requires little water once established. It imparts a delightful smell to your fingers when you touch it, and I like planting it next to the sidewalk for that reason. It has pretty, usually blue, flowers during the cooler part of the year that are bee, butterfly, and bird magnets. Leaves are widely used for seasoning. What more could you want?

It is a very versatile plant in the garden. Some varieties, such as ‘Prostratus’ and ‘Huntington Carpet’, are ground covers. These are often used on slopes or to cascade down garden walls. Other varieties grow upright. ‘Golden Rain’ grows to only about two to three feet tall. ‘Tuscan Blue,’ on the other hand, grows quite tall, as much as six to seven feet. The upright forms can be grown as hedges, pruned to a specific shape or you totally ignore them, and they’ll still look nice in their natural shape. The upright forms tend to have more aromatic oils so are usually better for culinary use. Just make sure to check the plant label to make sure that you’re buying the type and size of rosemary that will work in your garden.

Rosemary is also easy to propagate. You can take cuttings in the early summer from non-flowering branches. You can also bury an established branch in a shallow trench, cover the soil with a rock to prevent it from springing up out of the ground, and wait. It should form roots within a few months and then you can cut it off from the parent plant and transplant it.

Rosemary does have one drawback. Those aromatic oils not only add flavor to meals but, unfortunately, they also are extremely flammable. So you shouldn’t plant rosemary near your house. If possible, plant at least 30 feet away from the house.

Rosemary needs good drainage. Too much water heavy feeding causes rank growth, encouraging woodiness instead of leaf growth. All in all, Rosemary is an easy and rewarding plant that thrives in foothill gardens.

Master Gardener classes are offered monthly throughout the county. You can find our class schedule at: http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu/Public_Education_Classes/?calendar=yes&g=56698,

and recorded classes on many gardening topics here:
http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu/Public_Education/Classes/

Sherwood Demonstration Garden is open March - November every Friday and Saturday from 9AM to noon. We offer tours on the first Saturday of the month at 9AM. Volunteers are on-hand to answer questions, or you can just enjoy the garden. Please check our website for further information about the Sherwood Demonstration Garden at:
https://ucanr.edu/sites/EDC_Master_Gardeners/Demonstration_Garden/

Have a gardening question? Master Gardeners are working hard to answer your questions. Use the “Ask a Master Gardener” option on our website: mgeldorado.ucanr.edu or leave a message on our office telephone: 530-621-5512. We’ll get back to you! Master Gardeners are also on Facebook, Instagram, and Pinterest.

For more information on the UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County, see our website at <http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu>. To sign up for notices and newsletters, see http://ucanr.edu/master_gardener_e-news.