

Tom's Garden

Blog *October 2020*

Rosemary

Rosemary (*Rosemarinus officinalis*) is a perennial herb in USDA zones 8 and warmer where it can be planted in the garden and can grow 4 feet tall and spread about 4 feet wide depending on the variety.

For us in northeast Ohio, growing rosemary in containers lets us bring the plant indoors during the winter to keep it alive.

I planted my rosemary in the ground this spring and it thrived! It thrived so much that it is now too large to dig up, put in a container and bring indoors. I have decided to take cuttings and root them in the house to put out next spring.



This is the perfect time to start a new batch of plants. The fresh green stems are what you want to select for softwood cuttings.

Instead of buying a new rosemary plant each year, try growing your own from stem cuttings.

Benefits of growing rosemary from stem cuttings include:

*Earlier harvest: A rooted rosemary plant from a cutting will mature quickly and reach a usable size in just a few months.

*Same as mother plant: A plant grown from cuttings will be an exact clone of the mother plant, have the same flavor, disease resistance and growth habit.

*Extra plants for free: A single plant can provide many cuttings without harming the plant. You can line your kitchen windowsill with several plants that will smell wonderful when you brush your hand against them.

Method:

1. Select new shoots from the mother plant. Choose healthy stems with fresh growth. The younger shoots will have green stems that are flexible. Avoid brown, woody stems.
2. Use sharp scissors and snip the rosemary stem about 5 to 6 inches back from the tip. Cut plenty of extra stems in case some fail to grow roots.



3. Strip the lower leaves. Grasp your fingers around the stem and gently strip off the lower 2 inches of needles from the stem of the cutting (use these for recipes in the kitchen).

4. Place cuttings in water. Stick the stems in a jar of water and place the jar in a warm place away from direct sunlight. Change the water every couple of days, replacing with room-temperature water. The fresh water provides dissolved oxygen and prevents the cuttings from rotting.



The rosemary stem cuttings should grow roots in a few weeks. After 4 to 8 weeks it should be apparent if the cuttings have survived. The cuttings that do not survive will be brown and shed needles.

Pot up the stem cuttings once roots develop. Use a well-draining cactus potting soil.

Place the newly potted plant in indirect bright light until the roots become established, and then move to direct light at least 6 to 8 hours a day. Keep the potting soil moist but don't over water. You can also use grow lights in winter months.

Let the plants put on some new growth before harvesting. Don't harvest more than 1/3 of the plant at a time.

Repot as the plant gets larger and the roots fill the container. Keep transplanting to a larger container and use prunings frequently to make a bushier plant.

Put the container outside in May or plant in-ground for the summer.

Moving Houseplants Back Indoors

When the nights start getting chilly in the fall, it's time to move houseplants that were outside back indoors for the winter.

Before taking your plants indoors it is important to check for pests on and under the leaves, on the stems and at the base of the plant. To check the soil, where some insects live, remove the plant from the pot or submerge the pot in water for 15 minutes- this causes hidden hitch-hikers to scramble from the soil. Remove any dead or damaged leaves and give them a quick spray with the garden hose before bringing them indoors. Woody plants should be checked for scale on the stems and leaves.



Scale insects

Quarantine the plants for a couple of weeks away from other houseplants and look for any pests you may have missed. It is common for plants to drop some leaves when brought indoors. Water only when the top of the soil becomes dry.

A Quick Primer on Garlic

Garlic: *Allium sativum*

Garlic was long considered a magical herb, widely used in spells to ward off evil. Ancient herbalists were writing about its supposed medicinal properties 4,000 years ago.

Garlic is essential in the kitchen, and many people use it medicinally. It also deters some pests in the garden.

Getting Started: In fall pull cloves from a garlic bulb and plant the largest ones, pointed end up, 4 to 6 inches apart and 2 inches deep, in full sun and moist, well-drained soil. Best sources for garlic cloves to plant are seed catalogues, friends who grow garlic, farmers markets and garlic you grew and saved. Grocery store garlic is treated with a compound to keep it from sprouting in the store, but will sometimes work. The “hard neck” variety is best for our Ohio climate.

Growing: Mulch during winter in cold climates. Provide an inch of water per week and fertilize twice in the spring. Remove flower stalks or scapes to promote bigger bulbs. Use these in your recipes.

Harvesting and Uses: When the tops yellow and fall over (July), dig up the bulbs. Dry them on a screen or hang them in an airy, shaded place for 2 to 3 weeks. Remove tops and roots, leaving an inch of stem. Store in a cool, dry place; don't refrigerate.

Alternatively, separate the cloves and keep them in the freezer. Drop peeled cloves in a jar of olive oil and refrigerate.

Tulip: *Tulipa*

A tulip is botanically an annual, meaning that it must make a new bulb every year. Conditions in some parts of the world, such as Holland, are conducive to this lifecycle. However in many areas in this country, especially in the American South, soil temperatures are too high and new bulbs do not form. In these places bulbs are replaced each year for the best show. Some of our mild winters lately have caused this to happen here in Ohio. Most landscapers in Ohio treat tulips as annuals. Tulips are inexpensive and the show is well worth the dollars spent.

If you are planting in an area where tulips come back each year, place them in full sun. Planting in the fall provides the cool temperatures the flowers need to break free from the bulb and arise from the soil. Tulips prefer well-drained soil with some compost worked in, or bonemeal hoed in before planting. Plant the bulbs 4 to 5 inches deep and 4 to 6 inches apart, hopefully in groups and not in straight lines like soldiers. Shallow planting is the main cause of failure with tulips.



