

Keeping Rosemary Indoors

Traversing the challenges of keeping rosemary plants healthy during the cold season



At a Glance

Pot Size: A little deeper than the height of the foliage.

Soil: Well-drained cactus soil

Water: Only when soil is completely dry; Use a pebble tray with water to achieve ambient humidity for the plant to absorb through its foliage.

Sun: Full, bright sun both indoors and outdoors.

Fertilizer: Only during active growing season.

Root Pruning: If the plant becomes root-bound, you can trim up to 2" from the bottom and sides of the root ball and repot into fresh soil.

Rosemary's Native Climate

Knowing rosemary's history can help inform proper care once brought indoors. This is a mediterranean herb from a dry region, and needs well drained soil and hot, sunny temperatures. Rosemary is accustomed to absorbing ambient moisture from the sea air. The closer you can imitate its natural growing conditions, the more success you'll have keeping your rosemary plant thriving once indoors.

Choosing the Right Pot & Soil

Choose a pot that closely matches the size of your plant. If the foliage is around 8" tall, the pot should be at least 8" deep or deeper with at least 1" of space between the roots and the inside of the pot.

Pots must have proper drainage, as well as a saucer to catch overflow. We recommend using cactus soil mix to ensure drainage is adequate.

Rosemary will only grow as large as the pot it's growing in. Once the plant looks to be the same approximate height as the pot, you may need to either transplant into a larger pot, or prune the roots.

After each season, your plant will have extracted all of the available nutrients in its soil. Repot with new soil and prune the plant's roots if necessary.

Creating Proper Drainage

Rosemary is often called an "upside-down plant" because it likes dry roots, and prefers to absorb moisture from the air through its foliage.

Add a layer of gravel or small rocks to a small tray or pan and fill with enough water that the bottom of the container is fully moistened, but rocks are not completely submerged. Set the pot on top of the rocks, ensuring that it's not sitting directly in the water. When the water in the tray evaporates, it will create an aura of humidity around the plant that it can absorb through its foliage. Be sure to keep a consistent amount of liquid in the humidity tray at all times.

Letting the Light Shine Through

Rosemary needs full sun, both outdoors and indoors. When inside, a bright south-facing window will work best.

If necessary, you can supplement lower light conditions with a full spectrum artificial grow light.

Watering Rosemary

Overwatering your rosemary can quickly spell trouble. When indoors, water thoroughly once soil is completely dry. If you're unsure, test the soil with your finger for moisture or use a moisture meter. It's also a good idea to fill a clean spray bottle with water and mist the foliage once or twice weekly.

Fertilizing

Fertilize your plant in the spring during its active growing season. Begin one month before you plan to relocate the plant outside for summer. This is generally around mid-late-April in Colorado. Follow the manufacturer's directions on the fertilizer of your choice. You may want to try using a fish emulsion. You should be able to fertilize 2-3 times before moving outdoors.

Root Pruning

If you prefer to keep your plant in the same pot, you may want to try pruning its roots. Gently dislodge the plant from its pot and note whether the roots are tightly wound around the perimeter. If this is the case, cut about 2" of root matter from the bottom and sides before repotting into new soil. Keep the plant in a shady area for a couple days while it acclimates to these changes.