

Ask a Herbalist

A HERB FOR REMEMBRANCE

Rosemary

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If there were a staple herb in the garden of herbalists and culinary enthusiasts alike, it would be rosemary, a plant that dances the boundary of food and medicine. Its spicy, fragrant, and bitter flavour profile adds delicious seasoning to meat and root vegetable dishes and hints at its broad therapeutic applications. Rosemary exerts warming and stimulating actions in the body that benefit cardiovascular, circulatory, and digestive health. It is also well-studied as a tonic for cognitive health, where it demonstrates clinically significant effects on mood, memory, learning, and pain.^{1,2}

Packed with minerals and vitamins A, C, B6, riboflavin, and folate, the plant contains several phytochemical powerhouses, flavonoids, terpenoids, alkaloids, and essential oils. It is rosemary's phenolic acids, *rosmarinic* and *carnosic*, which have been studied most for their potent anti-inflammatory and antioxidant qualities. With a broad range of therapeutic actions, rosemary is considered to be carminative, antispasmodic, a circulatory stimulant, nervine, rubefacient, antimicrobial, emmenagogue, and bitter. Rosemary is interwoven with our earliest and most enduring social rituals due to its folkloric association with preserving memory. As famously declared by the ill-fated Ophelia in Shakespeare's Hamlet: "There's rosemary, that's for remembrance. Pray you, love, remember."^{1,2,3}

PRACTICAL USES

- » In my apothecary, I mix dried rosemary leaves into a warming nervine tea; I find it invaluable as a digestive aid and utilise its gentle antimicrobial action in formulas to address imbalances in intestinal bacteria.
- » Its warming, stimulating effects on circulation and cognition make it a useful support for those in convalescence—nourishing the vascular systems as well as uplifting and nurturing the spirit.
- » I apply rosemary-infused olive oil to aid sore muscles and stiff joints and find it particularly valuable in cases of neuropathic pain.
- » It's a powerful herbal ally for periods of creative work and intense study. Many herbalists have leaned into the invigorating power of rosemary tea as we spend a great deal of time with our books.

HISTORY

There is evidence of rosemary's use inscribed on cuneiform tablets dated as early as 5,000 BCE. Its botanical Latin name, *Rosmarinus*, translates to "dew of the sea" and is believed to be a

Herbal Profile



Salvia rosmarinus

Common names: Rosemary

Family: *Lamiaceae* (mint family)

Parts Used: Leaves and twigs

Taste: Spicy, fragrant, bitter

Energy: Warming, drying, diffusive/stimulating

Active Constituents: Flavonoids (apigenin, diosmetin, luteolin), proanthocyanidins, tannins, terpenoids (carnosol, carnosolic acid, rosmariquinone, rosmarinic), triterpenes: ursolic acid, oleanolic acid; phenolic acids*, rosmarinic acid, volatile oils (borneol, camphene, camphor, cineole, limonene, linalool)

Herbal Actions: Carminative, antispasmodic, antidepressant, rubefacient, antimicrobial, emmenagogue, antioxidant, circulatory stimulant, bitter

Internal Use (stimulant): Tones the cardiovascular structures; uterine tonic, emmenagogue; nervine tonic; digestive aid; gentle stimulation of the hepatobiliary tract

External Use: Can be applied as a tea wash or diluted essential oil to the scalp to increase local circulation. Diluted oil has mild analgesic effects when applied to painful muscles, arthritic joints, or areas of neuralgia.

System tropism:

- » Cardiovascular
- » Nervous System
- » Gastrointestinal
- » Reproductive: Uterus

Illustration: vladayoung / DepositPhoto.com

reference to the coastal environments of the Mediterranean, where it originates from and thrives. Rosemary's leaves and oil have been well established in Mediterranean traditional medicine and cuisine for centuries. Widely associated with cleansing and memory-strengthening qualities, this herb was employed in ancient Egyptian embalming practices as well as a diverse range of ceremonial settings in both ancient Greek and Roman civilisations. Predominantly utilised in funerals to commemorate the dead, rosemary has also been seen as a symbol of love and fidelity and was associated with wedding ceremonies across Europe into the Middle Ages. Rosemary's camphor-like aroma was said to have been used in hospital sick chambers in France alongside juniper boughs, where the herbs were burned together to cleanse the air.^{2,4,5,6,7,8}

Character

Rosemary has a planetary correspondence to the sun by its warming, drying, and aromatic qualities. From a medical astrology perspective, the sun demonstrates correspondence to the heart, cardiovascular, and circulatory systems, as well as the digestive fire or *agni*, which generates and promotes effective circulation of the vital energy of the body.⁹

PLANT DESCRIPTION

A perennial evergreen shrub with slender upright shoots, rosemary can grow as tall as six feet. Its narrow, opposite sessile leaves possess a pine-like scent and are soft, usually about an inch long with shiny dark green tops and a downy lighter underside. Most of rosemary's volatile oils are located in the calyces of its light purple flowers which are often visited by bees and other pollinators in temperate climates during late Spring; flowers may continue to bloom throughout the year in warmer environments. Rosemary loves the sun and thrives in summer's humidity. It is ideally planted in well-drained, loamy soil and requires little watering. The plant is very easy to grow from cuttings and does well potted and perched in a sunny spot indoors to ensure its survival through Canadian winters.

PROPERTIES & INDICATIONS

CARDIOVASCULAR & PERIPHERAL VASCULAR HEALTH:
Rosemary warms and stimulates the blood and has a toning effect on vascular structures to address conditions of cold debility and stagnancy. Renowned Herbalist Juliette Debaircli-Levy declared, "I use it [rosemary] more than any other plant and I love it most of all." Debaircli-Levy described us-

ing a rosemary infusion with honey as a supportive tonic for conditions affecting the heart and blood flow. The womb, being another vascular organ, benefits from rosemary's warming and circulatory tonic qualities; it's also known to be supportive in conditions of delayed or absent menses.^{5,9}

- Indications:
- » Cold hands and feet

» General debility following illness

» Postural hypotension

» Amenorrhea

» Conditions affecting the arteries such as high cholesterol and arteriosclerosis

» Thinning hair (topical use)^{5,10}

COGNITIVE HEALTH:

The herbalist Culpepper said that rosemary "helps a weak memory and quickens the senses." Considered both a nerve stimulant and a relaxant, rosemary has been studied extensively for its neuroprotective qualities, with recent research focusing on the effects of phytochemical extracts on modulating neurochemical GABA, which impacts mood. Studies indicate rosemary has both anti-inflammatory and antidepressant effects, making it particularly useful in neurodegenerative conditions.¹

Rosemary and Pain: A clinical study examining rosmarinic acid—a compound found in rosemary—demonstrated positive effects on oxidative damage and inflammatory biomarkers such as COX-2, illustrating its value as an adjuvant therapy to pain management.¹

- Indications:
- » Nervous tension

» Brain fog

» Memory decline

» Periods of study

» Symptoms of depression

» Symptoms of anxiety

» Headache (avoid use in vascular headaches such as migraine)¹⁰

» Headache with pain behind the eyes

DIGESTIVE HEALTH:

Rosemary has been found to support metabolic function, effectively breaking down fats and processing excesses in blood sugar. While it's considered primarily to be a warming and drying herb, it has a moistening, stimulating, and toning effect on the gallbladder and smooth muscle of the intestines, making it useful in addressing symptoms related to sluggish digestion.⁵

- Indications:
- » Indigestion

» Poor appetite

» Atonic stomach conditions

» Dysbiosis

» Halitosis (bad breath)

» Stomach upset accompanied by psychological tension or headache

SAFETY & CONTRAINDICATIONS

There are no known contraindications or drug interactions associated with rosemary; however, take caution not to consume it in excess during pregnancy if it's not regularly part of your diet.



RECIPE: *Fresh Rosemary Tincture*

- Ingredients
- » Rosemary leaves and flowers

» Vodka or other menstruum spirit

- Supplies
- » Sterilised jar

» Wax paper

» Cheesecloth

- Instructions
- 1 Harvest the leaves and flowers and fill a sterilised jar two-thirds full with plant material.

2 Add menstruum spirit (such as vodka) to cover 1 inch above plant material, making sure all is submerged.

3 Cover the opening with wax paper and seal it with a lid.

4 Store the preparation in a cool place out of direct sunlight and gently shake the jar daily for 6 weeks.

5 Strain through cheesecloth and press out the remaining herbal material.

Enjoy your homemade fresh tincture for up to 2 years. ☞

For references visit ecoparent.ca/ELV/WIN24

PREPARATIONS & APPLICATIONS

Dosage: 4-6 g total daily

Tincture: (1:5 in 40%) 1-2 ml, 3x daily

- Tea (infusion):
- » Pour 1 c of low-boiled water over 1-2 tsp of dried herb.

» Steep covered for 10-15 minutes.

» Drink up to 3 times per day.

Dried: Gather sprigs of rosemary and hang them upside down by woody stems in a cool place that's away from direct light.

Essence: Utilised to soothe energy and bring order to the emotional body. It's supportive of mental clarity and creative work, such as writing.¹¹

