

Common Name: **Rosemary**

Genus: *Rosmarinus*

Species: *officinalis*

Family: *Lamiaceae*

AKA: Rosmarinus, Polar Plant, Compass-weed, Compass Plant, Incensier, Bopen



Historical Uses:

Medical:

“It has a warming facultie, curing of ye Icterus, if any have sod it in water give it to drink before exercises, and then he who has exerciseth doe bath and be drenched with wine: it is also mixed with Acopa, and ye Gleucinum unguentum.” (1)

“For toothache, take the plant we call *rosmarinum* and give it to eat. Without delay it will relieve the toothache. If the juice is held in the mouth, it will quickly heal the teeth. For the sickly, take the plant *rosmarinum*, pound it with oil, and rub it on the person. You will heal him wonderfully. For liver and abdominal disease, take a handful of the same plant, pound it into water, and mix with two handfuls of spikenard and some stalks of rue. Simmer together in water and give to drink. The person will get better. For fresh wounds take this plant, pound it with lard, and lay it onto the wound.” (2)

“Rosemarie is given against all fluxes of bloud; it is also good, especially the floures thereof, for all infirmities of the head and braine, proceeding of a cold and moist cause; for they dry the brain, quicken the senses and memorie, and strengthen the sinewie parts. *Serapio* witnesseth, that Rosemarie is a remedie against the stuffing of the head, that commeth through coldnesse of the braine, if a garland thereof be put about the head, whereof whereof *Abuin Mesuai* giveth testimonie. The distilled water of the floures of Rosemarie being drunke at morning and evening first and last, taketh away the stench of the mouth and breath, and maketh it very sweet, if there be added thereto, to steep or infuse for certain daies, a few Cloves, Mace, Cinnamon, and a little Annise seed. The Arabians and other Physitions succeeding, do write, that Rosemarie comforteth the brain and memorie, the inward senses, and restoreth spech unto them that are possessed with the dumbe palsie, especially the conserve made



of the floures and sugar, or any other way confected with sugar, being taken every day fasting.” (3)

Culinary: Rosemary was one of the best loved as well as one of the most useful of all mediaeval garden herbs. It is found in recipes for salads and green sauces for fish and as a flavoring for wine.” (4)

“*Tragus* writeth, that Rosemarie is a spice in the Germane Kitchens, and other cold countries.” (5)

Household: “The boar’s head at Christmas was “garlanded with rosemary”, and rosemary scented the water for hand washing at meals. Banckes Herbal states that if you “take the flowers and put them in a chest among your clothes or among your books, the moths shall not hurt them....Also take the flowers and make a powder thereof and bind it to thy right arm in a linen cloth and it shall make thee light and merry...Also, boil the leaves in white wine and wash thy face therewith.... And thou shall have a fair face.” (6)



Folklore/Astrology: “Belongs to the Sun, warm and dry in the third degree. It warded off the evil eye and purged dwellings of evil, freeing them from witchcraft.” (7)

“It is under the celestial Ram.” (8)

“Also put the leaves under thy bed’s head and thou shall be delivered of all evil dreams.... Also, make thee a box of the wood and smell it and it shall preserve thy youth.” (9)

Other: “Rosemary was worn at weddings and twined into bridal wreaths; it was a symbol of remembrance and of fidelity to the marriage vows, for rosemary strengthened the memory, brain, and heart. Often dipped into scented water, it was sometimes gilded, and augured good fortune. It was said to flourish in households where the wife ruled and to act as a preservative against pestilence, whence it was carried in gatherings (such as trials and funerals) and burned in sickrooms. It was carried at funerals after being dipped in plain water and strewn or planned on the gravesite to commemorate the deceased.” (10)

“Libanotis which ye Romans call Rosmarinus, and they which plait crowns do use it.” (11)

Gerard names this plant as Rosmarinum coronarium and by way of explanation cites the Roman habit of using the plants for “crownes and garlands”. (12)

Contemporary Uses:

Parts Used: Leaves, oil, flowers.

Medicinal: “An aromatic, restorative herb that relaxes spasms, relieves pain, and increases perspiration rate. It also stimulates the liver and gall bladder, improves digestion and circulation, and controls many pathogenic organisms. Internally for depression, apathy, nervous exhaustion, headaches and migraines associated with nervous tension or feeling cold, poor circulation, and digestive problems associated with anxiety. Externally for rheumatism, arthritis, neuralgia, muscular injuries, wounds, dandruff, scurf, and hair loss.” (13)

Culinary: “Fresh or dried leaves are used to flavor meat, sausages, soups, and stews; also to make tea. Very small amounts, often ground or powdered, are added to cookies and jams. Fresh sprigs are steeped whole in vinegar, wine, or olive oil, to give rosemary flavor to sauces and dressings.” (14)

Economic: “Extracts are used in hair, skin, and bath products.” (15)

Cautions: Excess causes abortion in pregnant women and convulsions.

Area of Origin: Caucasus to southern France to North Africa

Physical description: Shrubby herb with evergreen leaves, aromatic with upright spreading branches.

Plant type: Perennial

Height: To 6ft., varies by variety

Flower color: Majority: Pale to dark blue

Flowering period: Spring

Soil type/requirements: Well drained sandy or gravelly soil. Soil should be moist but not wet.

pH: 4.5 to 8.7, average 6.8

Hardiness zone: USDA zone 7-10

Sun requirements: Full sun

Propagation: By cuttings which is the easiest way or by seeds. Difficult to grow by seed due to low viability and slow growth. (16)

Sources

1. Diocorides, pg. 321
2. Van Arsdall, pg.184
3. Gerard, pg. 1292-1294
4. Freeman, pg. 40-41
5. Gerard, pg. 1292-1294
6. Freeman, pg.40-41
7. Anderson, pg. 275
8. Culpeper, pg. 138
9. Freeman, pg.40-41
10. Anderson, pg. 275

11. Diocorides, pg. 321
12. Gerard, pg. 1292-1294
13. Bown, pg 348-349
14. Ibid
15. Ibid
16. Tucker, pg. 512-513

Illustrations/Images:

1. Schoffer's Herbal 1485
2. PSUMG 2005

Last Revised: August 2013