

My Favorite Herb by Master Gardener Virginia McCrary

If I had to choose one her, it would be rosemary. Not only is it one of the easiest herbs to grow, it is also one of the most versatile. Its uses range from cooking, perfumes, soaps, lotions, and teas, to medicinal purposes. Best of all, it is easy to grow.

A tough plant, rosemary, is a native of the Mediterranean area, and yet it thrives in the drought, heat, and rocky areas of Texas. A perennial herb, it will flourish in either alkaline or acidic soils. Rosemary does require good drainage to survive. While its growth is slow, it can grow to a height of sic feet. It usually can withstand our harsh winters; however, I lost a four foot high rosemary during an especially cruel winter. I now use container planting for my herbs.

It is commonly called the “remembrance herb” due to the belief that it improves memory. With this thought in mind, I’ve been drinking rosemary tea. I steep rosemary leaves in boiling water for a few minutes; but I must confess, it is not the best tasting tea in the world. However, like many herbal teas, it becomes an acquired taste, and it is also a soothing drink.

On the plus side, rosemary is rich in vitamins A and C, as well as calcium, iron, magnesium and zinc. Whole or ground leaves are excellent on all meats, poultry, or fish. If you are grilling, toss sprigs of rosemary on hot coals for about 10 minutes before the end of grilling. It gives meat an irresistible zip.

I like to add a couple of teaspoons of dried rosemary to my yeast bread recipe, which makes 3 tasty loaves. I close with one of my favorite easy rosemary recipes.

Rosemary Honey Cookies

½ cup shortening
¼ cup butter or margarine
¾ cup sugar
1 egg
¼ cup honey
1 tablespoon lemon juice
2 teaspoons of crushed dried rosemary
1 teaspoon baking soda
½ teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon cinnamon
¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg

In a mixing bowl, cream shortening, butter, and sugar. Beat in egg, honey, and lemon juice. Combine dry ingredients and add to creamed mixture. Drop by teaspoons full, 2 inches apart onto greased baking sheets. Bake at 325 degrees for 12-14 minutes or until lightly browned.

Yield: About 4 dozen
Enjoy!!