Vegetative Propagation of Rosemary (Rosemarinus Officinalis) for Production in Urban Gardens

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Rosemary is a popular herb among all the ethnic groups of the District of Columbia. It is relatively easy to grow and fits well into the production system of the small urban gardens of the Washington Metropolitan Area. As a spice, rosemary can be used fresh or dried, finely ground, chopped or sprigs. This herb is used to flavor meats, soups, stews, fish and even vegetable salads. Although rosemary has become a popular herb in the urban gardens of the Washington Metropolitan area and a tasty spice in our culinary arts, we sometimes have difficulty in obtaining seeds for planting. A solution to this problem is to produce plants through vegetative propagation of existing plants in our urban gardens or growing in pots on a patio. For vegetative propagation of rosemary plants, a simple procedure should be followed. First, the gardener should select a healthy growing plant as shown in Fig I. The area where the procedure will be performed should be clean and relatively cool (64-77 degree F). From the parent plant as shown in Fig I, make cuttings of five to six inches long (Fig II).

Always use a sharp clean knife to make the cuttings. Once the cuttings have been made, they should be kept at room temperature and at least 50 per cent relative humidity for no longer than 30 minutes before they are placed in a growing medium. The growing medium used may be wet sand for temporary rooting (Fig III – right) or a permanent growing medium made from soil: compost and sand with a ratio of 1:1:1 (Fig III – left). The compost can be either animal or yard waste.
For rooting the cuttings, the mixed medium or sand is placed in pots 17.5 centimeters or 7 inches in diameter (Fig III) and watered to saturation. After watering, the cuttings are planted in the pots and kept in a greenhouse at 70-75 degrees F. If a greenhouse is not available, pots with cuttings should be kept in a cool shaded area of the backyard and or garden. Until the cuttings are well rooted, pots should be watered to full water holding capacity (wet to the touch of a finger). Since sand will not provide the nutrients needed for the plants to grow to maturity, cuttings rooted in sand are transplanted in pots with the mixed medium after 50 days.

With careful watering and temperatures ranging from 70-75 degrees F, plants produced from cutting will be ready for harvesting in 8-9 months (Fig V.).
Vegetative propagation of rosemary plants can be a fun loving gardening activity. The procedure is simple and if the suggestions given are followed, gardeners will be able to grow rosemary productively without the need for locating scarcely available, viable seeds.

![Fig V. Rosemary cuttings (Fig 1 and II) now developed into full plants eight months after rooting.](image)

**RECIPE CORNER**

**Delightful, Delicious, Zesty Rosemary Punch**

**INGREDIENTS:**
- Fresh rosemary sprigs, about 2 handfuls for full flavor
- 2 cups of water
- 1 liter of chilled ginger ale
- 12 ounces frozen pineapple juice

**PREPARATION:**

In a saucepan, combine rosemary sprigs with water, bring to a boil, stirring occasionally. Let this mix simmer for about five minutes. After which, remove all sprigs, cover, and cool. Add pineapple juice to cooled mixture, stir, and refrigerate. When ready to serve, add chilled ginger ale and stir. Enjoy!
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Happy Gardening!

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