

# TIME TO TAKE ROSEMARY CUTTINGS

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It's about this time I look at replenishing my stock of **rosemary** plants. It's one of my favourite herbs, which I like to have in plentiful supply as I use it all the time in the kitchen, not to mention throwing a few sprigs on the BBQ on a summers evening. **Rosemary cuttings** are really easy to propagate and at this time of the year establish as plants fairly fast.

All you need to take your own **rosemary cuttings** is a nice bushy plant from which to take the cuttings, a free draining compost, rooting compound and a little dibber to heal in the cuttings. If you don't have a bush of your own perhaps a friend or neighbour would let you have a few cuttings to get your collection started.

We're fortunate at Blackbirds to have a few rosemary bushes that we can use as stock plants. They all came from cuttings that I took a few years ago and have gone on to flourish on our well drained chalky soil.

### **Selecting your cutting material**

By this time of the year rosemary plants will have put on lots of new healthy growth, and if you follow the green stems back to the base you should be able to see where the green stem changes to a woody brown colour. This kind of material makes great cuttings and gives you a fighting chance of producing a healthy plant.



Look for where the green of this years growth changes to brown wood stem

Last year we tried **raising cuttings** in just sharp sand, and although we had some success the cuttings took slightly longer to root and the plants didn't seem to grow on quite so well. So this year I've returned to a mix of 50% sharp sand, 50% John Innes potting compost (number 2), and the results have been excellent.

### **Removing the cuttings**

Take hold of the cutting and pull it back towards the base of the plant. It should break away from the main stem fairly easily, just be careful not to choose anything too large, or you may end up with a badly damaged plant.

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Perfect cutting material with decent heal

I use both seed trays and pots to raise my cuttings and both seem to work just as well. Dip the cutting into some water, (makes the rooting powder stick to the cutting far better) and then dip the cutting into the rooting compound. Make a few holes about an inch deep in the compost and drop the cuttings into the holes. Firm them in, and give the pot or tray a quick shake to settle the compost around the cutting.



Rooting compound will help to ensure success.

## Looking after your cuttings

If you want to guarantee success with your cuttings the key thing to remember is to avoid them drying out. When a cutting is removed from the parent plant it has no way of taking on water, other than through the leaves, so I like to sprinkle a little water over the leaves once a day, unless it's been raining of course, in which case I leave them to get on with it.

And that's pretty much it to be honest. With any luck in about 4-6 weeks they will develop their own roots and be ready to transplant into the garden, or into 3-inch plant pots for growing on. The roots are fairly delicate at this point so be careful not to damage them if possible, or all the hard work of the previous 4 weeks could be wasted.

I took a few pictures earlier today from my nursery bed. I've included a rooted cutting, a 1-year-old cutting and 2-year-old cutting. As you can see they don't put on a huge amount of growth in year 1, but by year 2 they find their feet and grow away quite happily.



A rooted cutting from this year - 1 years worth of growth and 2 years worth of growth

### ***Back Garden Nursery Update***

If you've been following our blog you'll know one of my ambitions is to start a little back garden nursery of my own. I had planned to launch earlier this year, but I lost a fair few cuttings due to the cold weather last year, despite keeping them in the Polytunnel, the cold was just too severe. As a result it's meant we've had to put that on hold while we build up stock levels.

Best wishes,

Tania.