



EL PASO COUNTY  
MASTER GARDENER  
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY  
EXTENSION

## Year Round Gardening

### **Overwintering Rosemary in your Colorado Springs Garden**

#### **Fredricka Bogardus, Colorado Master Gardener**

Many Pikes Peak region gardeners enjoy growing Rosemary as a summer herb. If left unprotected the plants will not survive our winter. Rosemary is actually a perennial plant in warmer climates. The USDA considers these plants to be zone 7 and above for cold hardiness. That means that generally they will not survive temperatures below 5°F. Colorado Springs cold hardiness zones are generally considered to be zone 5 or 6, meaning temperatures can drop as low as -20°F. There are a few cultivars that might be hardy to zone 6, Rosemary officinalis 'Arp' is an example.

Some gardeners like to bring Rosemary inside for the winter, but frequently the plants are too warm in the house, and don't thrive.

What if we could keep the plant just a bit warmer and keep it outdoors in the ground? I have two Rosemary plants in my garden that have spent three winters in the ground and are doing very well. I have protected them from late October until early May with a season extender usually called a Wall of



Water (also marketed as Tomato Teepee, Kozy Coats, etc.). The extender looks kind of like a tepee, comprised of cylinders that are filled with water. They are widely used by gardeners to plant tomatoes a few weeks earlier than our climate allows. The water in the tubes heats up during the day, then warms the plant in the colder nighttime.

I know several gardeners who provide insulation by simply surrounding the plant with an open cylinder and filling that cylinder with a light weight mulch. They have had success with that providing sufficient insulation.

Rosemary plants will do best if they are planted in a sunny location, with really good drainage. For overwintering proximity to reflected heat, near a light-colored wall, will probably help. Think about the part of your garden where the snow always melts first.

Wind can be a problem if it knocks the season extender down. Refilling these products is not fun in cold weather. To remedy that problem, I have used a tomato cage type product around the wall of water. Make sure it is big enough to surround the structure without puncturing the plastic.

I will put the protection up in late autumn. Remember these plants will not be damaged by a dip into 20 to 30 ° range so you don't have to panic about getting this done for light autumn frosts. I generally prune the plants back a bit at that point so that taller foliage will be well contained in the structure.

This column generally tries to provide well tested scientific information. This is not that. It is my experience that you might want to try. I do think that if we have a long stretch of very cold weather Rosemary might not survive that. I encourage you to give this technique a try if you are okay if your plant doesn't make it through next winter. When you have questions, Colorado State University Extension has research-based answers. The Help Desk is open at 17 N. Spruce St. Hours are 9 a.m. to noon and 1 to 4 p.m. Mondays and Wednesdays. Call 520-7684 or email [CSUmg2@elpasoco.com](mailto:CSUmg2@elpasoco.com).



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