



SARATOGA HORTICULTURAL FOUNDATION, INC.

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Rosmarinus officinalis 'Ken Taylor'

Rosemaries are fundamentally drought tolerant plants from the classic mediterranean climate. However in common with other 'low water usage' plants from such arid summer environments, they nevertheless require a sufficient soil water availability during their first growing season to establish, from the nursery containers, into the landscape situation. Subsequently they would normally be expected to survive with only the natural winter rainfall, providing it exceeds fifteen inches or so a year. In contrast they are plants which have the capability to survive and even tolerate the conventional levels of summer season irrigation. They will also succeed in heavy soil conditions despite their preference for well drained, light soils. Under these 'adverse' conditions they tend to grow more rankly and become less attractive plants.

The genus Rosmarinus has proved to be a taxonomically difficult group of plants and has received several treatments. The 'simplest' review recognizes it as monotypic while at the other extreme it is divided into twelve species. The intermediate proposals of Turrill have been adopted here - he proposed four species and included five botanical varieties of the 'Common Rosemary' (R. officinalis).

The cultivar 'Ken Taylor' is a sport of that plant which has been widely distributed and cultivated in California as 'Ingrami' (but more recently as 'Collingwood Ingram' in order to conform with the rules of nomenclature), and is used principally as a large scale ground cover. The plant was introduced in California from England by Elizabeth de Forest with material collected in the garden of Collingwood Ingram at Benenden. It is very similar to, or as is more likely, it is the same plant that is cultivated in England as 'Benenden Blue', and which received an Award of Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society in 1933. 'Collingwood Ingram' is certainly a selection of Turrill's botanical variety angustifolius as it has the typical narrow leaves, dark green lustrous appearance and the deep blue flower colour of this corsican provenance. The flowers of 'Collingwood Ingram' are particularly recognizable by the intensity and depth of colour - an unusually deep shade of gentian blue, which together with its spreading, semi-prostrate habit characterizes this cultivar.

The sport 'Ken Taylor' is distinguished only by its more prostrate growing habit, which is engendered by the laxity of the branches. This causes it to develop a significantly flatter and more trailing habit than the original variety. If it is grown on the flat it will mound to 18-24 inches at the centre but will spread out to an adpressed mat on which the young stems grow initially erect but eventually become lax. It readily extends to a diameter of six to eight feet. The unusually deep flower colour is retained and this fades but little in the californian sunshine - a particularly valuable attribute.

Although Rosemary plants of this corsican provenance are not the hardiest selections they are suitable for much of California, and this is confirmed by Mike Smith of Wintergreen Nursery who comments 'Hardy to 15°F' in his catalogue, when describing 'Ken Taylor'. In this respect it would probably be more tolerant than 'R. prostratus' which is normally a much less hardy plant.

In common with many woody ground covers, pruning for shape and conformation will sometimes be necessary; but with Rosemary this should be done regularly, as cutting back into old wood will rarely cause the stems to regrow.

The leaves of this plant are strongly aromatic with the characteristically pungent perfume of Rosemary.

The name 'Ken Taylor' perpetuates an acknowledgement of the work of that well known californian plantsman and nurseryman of Aromas, who recognized, selected and propagated this clone.

Low water use; ground cover; evergreen; flowering; aromatic foliage; bee plant.