



# Star Performers

## Rosemary flowers most of the time

*Rosmarinus officinalis* in the Mint Family (Labiatae)

Rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*) is a Star Performer because the aromatic flowers are highly attractive to bees and the plants are almost always in flower. Honey bees are constantly visiting even isolated shrubs in the city. Rosemary flowers in spring, summer and autumn and, if it is warm enough, in winter too. At times it stops flowering if it is too dry in late summer or too cold. As a Mediterranean plant, it is drought tolerant but slightly sensitive to frost. The prostrate form is great for trailing over a bank or garden wall. Upright forms can be pruned for hedges or topiary. The cultivar 'Tuscan Blue' is a robust upright form with a high density of large flowers. Larger flowers produce more nectar. Rosemary has medicinal and culinary uses since antiquity.



Rosemary flowers seen from all angles show the two lips and the position of the filaments and anthers.

**Pollen:** Rosemary flowers have the classic shape of flowers in the mint family with an upper and lower “lip” formed by petals. The two stamens stand upright tight against the upper lip. The anthers are small so the amount of pollen per flower is not huge but the protein level is good at 21 % in our sample.



Close up of rosemary shows entrance to nectary. Both photos by Jean Noël Galliot ©Trees for Bees NZ

**Nectar:** The floral tube formed by the two “lips” is relatively short at the base and wide open at the entrance allowing honey bees easy access to nectar. The nectary is a four lobed disc surrounding the base of the ovary. The flower is a perfect fit for both honey bees and bumble bees because the lower “lip” provides a good landing platform for the bees to hang onto while sipping nectar.