

## OREGANO



*Origanum vulgare subsp vulgare*  
[or-RI-ga-num vul-GAY-ree]

**Family:** Lamiaceae

**Pharmaceutical Name:** Herba Origani

**Names:** Oregan; Kungsmynnta, dosta, koning, oregano, vild mejram, vildmejram (Swedish); Kung, Bergmynte (Norwegian); Merian (Danish); Mäkimeirami (Finnish); Oregano, Wilder Majoran, Dost, Kostets (German); Anrar (Arabic); Wilde Marjolein (Dutch); Harilik pune (Estonian); Avishan kuhi (Farsi); Marjolaine bâtarde, Marjolaine sauvage,

Origan, Pelevoué, Marazolette, Penevoué, Thé rouge, Thym de berger, Doste (French); Oregánó, Szurokfű; vadmajoránna, Kaslók, Fekete gyopár (Hungarian); Oregano, Bergminta (Icelandic); Erba acciuga, Origanò (Italian); Lebiodka pospolita, Dziki majeranek (Polish); Onrégão, Orégano (Portuguese); Sovírf, Oregano (Romanian); Dushitsa (Russian); Orégano (Spanish); Izmir kekigi (Turkish);

**Description:** Wild marjoram is a perennial plant that grows wild in the Mediterranean region and in Asia. Its creeping rootstock produces a square, downy, purplish stem with opposite, ovate leaves that are dotted with small depressions. Purple, two-lipped flowers grow in terminal clusters from July to October.

**Cultivation:** Plants should be spaced about 30cm apart each way. Requires a rather dry, warm, well-drained soil in full sun, but is not fussy as to soil type, thriving on chalk. Prefers slightly alkaline conditions. Tolerates poor soils. Dislikes wet soils. Hardy to about -20°F. Members of this genus are rarely if ever troubled by browsing deer. Sow seed early spring at 50-55°F and only just cover the seed. Germination usually takes place within 2 weeks. Prick out the seedlings into individual pots when they are large enough to handle and plant them out into their permanent positions in early summer. The seed can also be sown in situ in late spring. Division in March or October. Very easy, larger divisions can be planted out direct into their permanent positions. We have found that it is better to pot up the smaller divisions and grow them on in light shade in a cold frame until they are well established before planting them out in late spring or early summer. Basal cuttings of young barren shoots in June. Very easy.

Harvest the shoots with plenty of underground stem when they are about 8 - 10cm above the ground. Pot them up into individual pots and keep them in light shade in a cold frame or greenhouse until they are rooting well. Plant them out in the summer. Collect in early July, as soon as it flowers

**History:** The Greek name *oríganon* might well contain *óros* "mountain", and the verb *ganoústhai* "delight in", because oregano prefers higher altitude in Mediterranean climate; yet a pre-Greek or Semitic origin of *oríganum* has also been discussed. A similar motivation may lay behind Norwegian *bergmynte* "mountain mint" (oregano and mint belong to the same plant family).

The Greeks used it as a remedy for narcotic poisoning, convulsions and dropsy. If marjoram grew on a grave it ensured the happiness of the departed. Both the Greeks and the Romans crowned young couples with marjoram.

Many species contribute to the oregano herb of commerce, to the extent that oregano should be considered more a flavor than a particular species. European oregano is generally derived from *O. vulgare*, but other species, particularly *O. hirtum*, *Coridothymus capitatus* (syn. *Thymus capitatus*) and *T. mastichina* are also used. Mexican oregano (sometimes known as Mexican sage) is derived mainly from *Lippia graveolens*, but other *Lippia* species and *Coleus*, *Lantana* and *Hyptis* species contribute to herb of commerce.

**Constituents** The essential oil (max. 4%) may contain variable amounts of the two phenoles carvacrol and thymol; furthermore, a variety of monoterpene hydrocarbons (limonene, terpinene, ocimene, caryophyllene,  $\beta$ -bisabolene and *p*-cymene) and monoterpene alcohols (linalool, 4-terpineol) are reported. Acids: Rosmarinic ( Plant and leaves) palmitic, stearic, oleic, ursolic, caffeic, capric ( Plant ); Essential oil rich in thymol , cineole, carvacrol, borneol, beta-bisabolene, limonene, alpha-pinene, beta- pinene, myrcene, camphene, alpha- terpinene (Plant); Minerals: Potassium,

magnesium, manganese, zinc, copper ( Plant); Tannins (Plant); Vitamins : Niacine, beta-catotene (Plant)

**Properties:** Expectorant, antiinflammatory, antiseptic of the respiratory system; emenagogue; vulnerary; stimulant, diaphoretic, rubefacient, antispasmodic, calmative, stomachic, carminative, tonic

**Energetics:** warm and spicy

**Meridians/organs affected:** Lung, liver and spleen

**Medicinal Uses:** It's difficult to think of a common kitchen herb like Oregano as a medical remedy, but it has in fact been used as a drug since the time of the ancient Greeks and Chinese. In China, doctors prescribed it to relieve fever, vomiting, diarrhea, jaundice, and itchy skin, while the Greeks made compresses from the leaves to treat sores and aching muscles. The primary ingredients in Oregano are thymol and carvacrol, which are also found in thyme. These compounds, researchers have found, help loosen phlegm in the lungs and relieve spasms in the bronchial passages. Many commercial cough remedies, including cough drops and skin rubs such as Vicks VapoRub, contain thymol. Digestive: Specially in cases of intestinal spasms. Thymol, carvacrol and borneol, together with caffeic acid, are the components that fundamentally exercise this function. (Infusion of a spoonful of flowers in a cup of water. Three cups a day, after the main meals) Besides helping the stomach , the hepatoprotective values of the ursolic acid, appart from a well- tested antitumoral activity, make it very appropriate for liver illnesses. Carminative: To expel intestinal gasses. Thymol and carvacrol, besides being antispasmodic, are appropriate to get rid off flatulence.

Useful for breathing ailments caused by infectious processes, as cold, flue, bronchitis, etc. eliminating the cough, reducing the inflammation in bronchuses and helping in the elimination of the germs (5 drops of

essence a day or 5 ml of extract of fluid). It slightly reduces the pains of the menstruation and facilitates the emptying, avoiding the collateral problems associated with it, such as headaches, pain in the stomach, retention of liquids, general irritability. (Infusion of flowers)

In external use the antiseptic and fungicide values mentioned previously can take advantage to disinfect wounds, but at the same time their analgesic and healing properties will remove us the pain and will help us to recover the external lesions. (Apply essential oil on the part of the skin affected with a clean compress) It is a good remedy for the pains and inflammations caused in the joints by the rheumatic illnesses. (Take a hot bath, pouring in the water a couple of liters of infusion of dry flowers) Gargle with the an infusion to combat the sore throat.

As a stimulating diaphoretic, *Origanum* is often used in the treatment of colds and influenza. An infusion of the fresh herb is of benefit for an upset stomach and indigestion, headache, colic and nervous complaints as well as for coughs, whooping cough and other respiratory ailments. It also helps to relieve menstrual cramps and makes a calming and tonic bath additive. An infusion of the flowers is said to prevent seasickness and to have a calming effect. *Origanum* can be used as a mouthwash for ulcers and inflammation of the throat, or it may be used externally for infected cuts and wounds. Tension headaches may be relieved by an infusion or by rubbing the temples with oil of marjoram. The oil may also be rubbed into areas of muscular and rheumatic pain, and topically for toothache. A lotion will relieve stings and bites. The bruised leaves placed in a pillowcase may be helpful for insomnia.

*Dosage:*

*Infusion:* for internal use, pour a cup of boiling water onto a teaspoon of the herb and infuse for 10-15 minutes; drink three times a day.

*Mouthwash:* pour half a litre of boiling water onto 2 tablespoons of the herb; infuse, covered,

for ten minutes and gargle for 10-15 minutes three or four times a day.

*Tincture:* 1-2ml three times a day.

**TCM:** Herb for Qi stagnation

Functions: regulates/circulates lung qi; opens the chest and relieves wheezing; resolves cold wetness/phlegm; dispels exterior Wind Cold (promotes sweating)

**Other Uses:** The flowering tops yield a reddish-brown dye and before the introduction of hops they were used in brewing. Wooden furniture was traditionally rubbed with the leaves to impart a pleasant fragrance.

**Culinary Uses:** *Oregano* is a *condicio sine qua non* in Italian cuisine, where it is used for tomato sauces, fried vegetables and grilled meat. Together with basil, it makes up for the character of Italian dishes. The dish most associated with oregano is *pizza*, a kind of open pie: Bread dough topped with tasty stuff and baked. Bread of this kind was probably eaten in Southern Italy since centuries; according to the legend, *pizza* came into existence in 1889, when King Umberto and his wife Margherita sojourned in Napoli (Naples). *Pizza*, at this time not more than white bread flavoured with tomato paste, was then a popular food for the poor masses. To honour the Queen, a local baker devised a richer kind of *pizza*: In addition to the red tomato paste, white *mozzarella* cheese and green basil leaves were employed, thus reflecting the colours of the Italian flag. This invention became known as *pizza Margherita* and spread all over Italy. Today's *pizze* rely more on oregano than on basil.

*Oregano* can effectively combined with pickled olives and capers or lovage leaves; other than most Italian herbs, oregano harmonizes even with hot and spicy food, as is popular in Southern Italy. The cuisines of other Mediterranean countries make less use of it, but it is of some importance for Spanish, French and Greek cooking. Outside the Mediterranean region, oregano is, rather surprisingly, little in use, except among Italian immigrants.



HERBALPEDIA™ is brought to you by The Herb Growing & Marketing Network, PO Box 245, Silver Spring, PA 17575-0245; 717-393-3295; FAX: 717-393-9261; email: herbworld@aol.com URL: <http://www.herbalpedia.com> Editor: Maureen Rogers. Copyright 2006. All rights reserved. Material herein is derived from journals, textbooks, etc. THGMN cannot be held responsible for the validity of the information contained in any reference noted herein, for the misuse of information or any adverse effects by use of any stated material presented.