

OREGANO

Wild Marjoram

Origanum vulgare

Lamiaceae

ECHO® PLANT INFORMATION SHEET

Description

There are more than fifty varieties of this aromatic perennial herb. The subtle flavors of the leaves of each vary with climate and soil conditions. The small, soft leaves attach to erect hairy stems that can grow up to 90 cm (3 ft) high. Its origin is the Mediterranean and North and West Asia where it is a favorite ingredient in cooking as well as in Latin American dishes. It is a close relative of marjoram. Most of the commercially produced Oregano is raised in Turkey.

Uses

Oregano is most popular as a herb used in Italian cooking. Oregano has strong sedative properties but a mild tea of the leaves is used to soothe nerves, aid sleep, relieve respiratory and digestive complaints, as a tonic, a diuretic and in compresses or lotions to heal external wounds and headache. It is often used as an ingredient in toothpaste.

Common Names

- French
 - marjolaine batarde

Cultivation

- Elevation: 0-2500 m (8000 ft)
- Rainfall: Water sparingly. Too much water will cause root rot.
- Soil Types: well-drained; can handle dry soils
- Temperature: up to 41° C (82° F) in frost-free zones
- Light: partial to full sun; It is said that the pungency of Oregano is directly related to the amount of sun it gets.

Oregano is easily grown from seed, cuttings or root division in average soil. It is a vigorous plant with long, creeping roots that spread out to find moisture. It is a good choice to grow in a raised bed or at the edges of a perennial flower garden.

Harvesting and Seed Production

After 45 days of growth or 15 cm (6 in) in height, cuttings may be harvested by pinching off all branches down to the lowest set of leaves so that branching out and new growth will follow. Harvest the leaves before flowering begins as the foliage and essential oil found in the leaves is sweeter. If not cut, small white or pink flowers will appear, mid-summer to fall, and growth will slow down. Dry leaves thoroughly before storing in air-tight containers. To save the seeds, let them mature on the plant, cut the whole seed-head, dry it in a dark, warm, dry place. Thresh the seeds from the stems and store them in a similar way as the leaves.

Pests and Diseases

Root rot, fungal diseases, mites, aphids and leaf miners effect Oregano. Diseases and pests are usually of little consequence to herbs except to spoil the appearance of the leaves.

Cooking and Nutrition

The aroma of Oregano is strong with a biting taste. Marjoram is a variety that is very similar except its flavor is more subtle so it is best to use it fresh or add it at the end of a cooked dish. Culinary herbs are stronger when dried as the moisture has been evaporated. Oregano is a distinctive herb, along with basil, in tomato-based Italian dishes like pizza. It is also an ingredient in salad dressings, and sausages.

References

<http://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/PlantFinder/PlantFinderDetails.aspx?taxonid=281411&isprofile=0&letter=O>

<http://ecocrop.fao.org/ecocrop/srv/en/cropView?id=2369>