
ENVIRONMENTAL HORTICULTURE

Environmental Horticulture #EH384



OREGANO

PRODUCTION AND CONSUMER CARE

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INTRODUCTION

- Common name: Oregano
- Scientific name: *Origanum vulgare*
- Native to Europe, the Mediterranean, and south-central Asia
- Perennial herb normally growing 8-12 inches tall
- Small white or purple flowers grow on long spikes
- Hardy in zones 5-10
- Widely used in Greek and Italian cuisines
- Has antioxidant and anti-microbial activity

GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

- Requires well-drained media in full sun

- Drought tolerant; water once every week or two during dry periods
- Produces a stronger flavor if not fertilized
- Can be grown indoors if provided with plenty of sun

PROPAGATION

- Plant seeds indoors in mid-spring; cover only lightly with media as seeds require light to germinate
- Transplant outdoors when temperatures remain above 45°F.
- In cold climates, oregano is best treated as an annual
- Space seedlings 12 inches apart, in rows 18 inches apart

DISORDERS

- Spider mites
 - Wash leaves regularly
- Aphids
 - Dislodge with a hard spray of water

CONSUMER CARE

- Sprigs can be taken once the plant reaches 4-5 inches in height
- Harvesting before the plant blooms yields the most flavorful leaves
- To harvest, cut stems down to the first two sets of leaves; new stems will grow and produce a second crop
- Leaves retain flavor best if added towards the end of cooking; flavor can become bitter if cooked longer than 30 minutes
- Dried oregano has a stronger flavor than fresh

CULTIVARS AND SPECIES

- *Origanum vulgare*
 - 'Aureum': yellow leaves
 - 'Hot and Spicy': spicier flavor than common oregano

- 'Jim Best': green and gold variegated leaves; ornamental rather than flavorful
- 'Santa Cruz': green leaves and pink flowers; ornamental rather than flavorful
- *Lippia graveolens* (Mexican oregano): similar flavor to common oregano, only stronger
- *Origanum heracleoticum* (Greek oregano): variety commonly used in Mediterranean cooking

References

- <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oregano>
- <http://www.gardenguides.com/plants/info/herbs/oregano.asp>
- <http://gardening.about.com/od/plantprofile/p/Oregano.htm>
- <http://www.gardenersnet.com/herbs/oregano.htm>

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