

Common Name: **Oregano**

Genus: *Origanum*

Species: *vulgare*

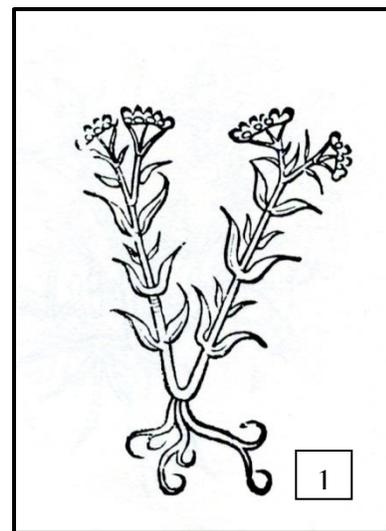
Family: Lamiaceae

AKA: Wild marjoram,



Historical Uses:

Medical: “Whoever has red leprosy, whether recently or for a long time, take oregano juice, add a little less horehound juice, henbane oil more than there is of the other two, and a little wine, and mix all these together. When a person is almost ready to leave the sauna, let the person pour this mixture over himself or herself. After the person leaves the sauna and is sweating greatly let the person cover himself or herself completely with goat tallow that has been dissolved in a small dish over a fire. Let them stay in bed while this dries. After it has dried let them take and pound the same oregano, add bran to its stems and mix these together in a small dish. Put this warm on the leprous sores, tie a bandage over them, and leave it there for some time while they are warmed by it. If the person does this often, he or she will be cured without a doubt, unless the person dies or unless God does not want the person cured.” (1)



“But it is of a warming facultie, whence ye decoction of it being drank with wine is good for such as are bitten by poisonous beasts, but with Passum for such as have drank Cicuta or Meconium. But with Oxymel for such as have drank Gypsum or Ephemerum, but for ye convulsions, & ruptures, & dropsies, it is eaten with a figge; but being drank dried ye quantity of an Acetabulum with melicreate it expels black (humors) through ye belly, & it moves ye menstrea, & cures coughs being licked in with Honey, & ye decoction of it in a bath is good for ye prurigo and ye Psorae & ye Icterus, but ye juice of it being green doth cure ye Tonsillae, and ye Uvulae, & ye Aphthae, and being dropped in with oleum Irinum it purgeth through the nostril. But with milke it assuageth ye ear paines. And a vomitory medicine is made of it & onions & Rhoos (that which is for sauce) all of them being sunned in the burning heat under ye dogge in a brass copper vessell for 40 days. But ye herb being strewed under, expells serpents.”(2)

“The decotion of Organy provoketh urine, bringeth downe the monethly termes, and is given with good successe to those that have the dropsie. It is probably used in a looch, or



a medicine to be licked, against an old cough and the stuffing of the lungs. It healeth scabs, itches, and scruinesse, being used in bathes, and it taketh away the bad colour which commeth of the yellow jaundice. The weight of a dram taken with meade or honied water, draweth forth by stoole blacke and filthy humors, as *Dioscorides* and *Pliny* write. The juice mixed with a little milke, being poured into the eares, mitigateth the paines thereof. The same mixed with the oile of *Ireos*, or the rootes of the white Florentine floure de luce, and drawne up into the nostrils, draweth down water and flegme: the herbe stowed upon the ground driueth away serpents. The decoction looseth the belly, and voideth choler; and drunke with vinegar helpeth the infirmities of the spleene, and drunke in wine helpeth against all mortal poisons, and for that cause it is put into mithridate

and treacles prepared for that purpose. These plants are easie to be taken in potions, and therefore to good purpose they may be used and minister unto such as cannot brooke their meate, and to such as have a soure and sqamish and watery stomacke, as also against the swouning of the heart.” (3)

“It strengthens the stomach and head much, there being scarce a better remedy growing for such as are troubled with a sour humor in the stomach; it restores the appetite, being lost; helps the cough, and the consumption of the lungs; it cleanses the body of choler, expelleth poison, and remedieth the infirmities of the spleen: helps the bitings of venomous beasts, and helps such as have poisoned themselves by eating Hemlock, henbane, or opium. It provoketh urine and the terms in women, helps the dropsy, and the scurvy, scabs, itch, and yellow jaundice. The juice being dropped into the ears helps deafness, pain and noise in the years. And thus much for this herb, between which and adders there is a deadly antipathy.” (4)

“It eases head colds, reduces a swollen vulva, helps digestion, relives stomach and intestinal pains, expels gas, and ends strangury and tenasmus. It dissolves tension in the womb, provokes the menses, relaxes the bowels, evacuates bile, strengthens the spleen, and taken with vinegar, is an antidote for poison.” (5)

Culinary: “Oregano also continues in use as a condiment and flavoring, although marjoram remains more highly favored for culinary purposes.” (6)

Household: “Used to crown young married couples in Greece and Rome, it also stepped up the potency of beer and kept it from souring.” (7)

Folklore/Astrology: “It is warm and dry in the third degree and is ruled by Mercury. Oregano tokened the happiness of the deceased if it grew upon a grave. It also prevented milk from being soured by thunder.” (8)

Other: “If any person eats or drinks Oregano, or lets it into the body in some other way, it causes leprosy and swells up the lungs. It also weakens the liver” (9)

“The name Origanum is derived from two Greek words, *Oros* (Mountain) and *Ganos* (joy), in allusion to the gate appearance these plants give to the hillsides on which they grow.” (10)

Contemporary Uses:

Parts Used: Whole plant, leaves, oil

Medicinal: “Internally for colds, influenza, minor feverish illnesses, indigestion, gas, stomach upsets, and painful menstruation. Contraindicated during pregnancy. Externally for bronchitis, asthma, arthritis, and muscular pain. Oil used in aromatherapy for similar conditions and, externally to kill lice.” (11)

Culinary: “An important herb in Italian Greek, and Mexican cooking, often used dried rather than fresh, in strongly flavored dishes in which ingredients such as chili, garlic, tomatoes, onions, olives, and wine predominate. Leaves and flowering tops are infused for tea.” (12)

Economic: “Oil is used in commercial food flavoring, toiletries, and men’s perfumes. Leave and flowers are added to potpourris.” (13)

Cautions: “Do not take as a medicine during pregnancy. External use may cause irritation of the skin. Do not take essential oil internally.” (14)

Note: *Origanum vulgare* has virtually replaced *O. majorana* in medicinal use. It is a remedial for narcotic poisoning, convulsions and dropsy. An antispasmodic for hysteria, it is also a medicine for dispelling flatulence and for causing a gentle sweat to carry off undesirable wastes, thus easing fever.

Area of Origin: Europe, western Asia, and northern Africa

Physical description: Variable, bushy rhizomatous perennial with woody-based upright to spreading, purple brown stems, and broadly ovate leaves, to 4cm long. Flowers appear in loose panicles in summer

Plant type: Perennial

Height: 12-28in (30-70cm)

Flower color: Purple-pink (occasionally pink or white)

Flowering period: Summer

Hardiness zone: USDA 5-9

Sources

1. Von Bingen, p. 105
2. Dioscorides, bk. 3, plant 32
3. Gerard, p. 667
4. Culpeper, p. 88-89
5. Anderson, p. 216-217
6. Ibid
7. Ibid
8. Ibid
9. Von Bingen, p. 105
10. Grieve, p.,520
11. Bown, p. 297
12. Ibid
13. Ibid
14. Chevallier, p. 242
15. Anderson, p. 216-217

Illustrations/Images:

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| 1. Schoffer Herbal | 1484 |
| 2. PSUMG | 2015 |