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*Origanum*

*Labiatae*

[*Lamiaceae*]

*Origanum* is derived from Greek *oro-* (mountain) and *gano-* (joy, bright) components and is a classical Greek name for these plants.

Oregano and marjoram of which there are many varieties are of the same *Origanum* genus. For culinary purposes they are virtually interchangeable but oregano when it has been grown in southern Europe has a much stronger, more peppery taste and needs to be used sparingly.

Medicinally, oregano (*Origanum vulgare*)/marjoram (*Origanum majorana*) species have been used by the ancient Greek and the Roman (and later western European as well) herbalists for treating a wide range of problems such as bruises, stiff joints and muscles, rheumatism, painful swellings, convulsions and fluid retention, as well as for easing toothache and earache, and even as a hair restorer. The species are also believed to provide an antidote for poisoning from henbane (*Hyoscyamus niger*), the opium poppy (*Papaver somniferum*) and hemlock (*Conium maculatum*).

Despite commercial cultivation in various parts of the world most supplies are still obtained from the wild in the Mediterranean regions, particularly from southern Italy.