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How to Grow Oregano Plants: The Complete Guide



Photo Credit: Pixabay

Botanical Name: *Origanum*

Plant Type: [Herb](#)

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Planting, Growing, and Harvesting Oregano Plants

By [Catherine Boeckmann](#)

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Oregano is a must-have culinary herb to grow in a garden or container—as well as an attractive ground cover. Discover more about oregano, from growing information to culinary tips.

About Oregano

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This growing guide is about true oregano, called Greek oregano (*Origanum vulgare hirtum*). It's a robust and flavorful herb with a peppery bite and a minty aroma. In Greek, the

word oregano means “joy of the mountain.”

Oregano adds savory flavor to pizza, tomato sauce, and anything tomato, as well as cooked summer vegetables such as zucchini and eggplant, a Greek salad, kabobs, roasted potatoes, white beans, a vinaigrette, and any egg dish. Its aromatic leaves can be used fresh or dried

It's a perennial woody herb that grows from 1 to 2 feet tall in an open, loose style that spreads to 18 inches wide (or more). It bears gray-green leaves and pretty white flowers, but do not let the herb flower for the best-tasting leaves.

Oregano is hardy to zone 4 plant, though some gardeners say it's only hardy to zone 5. It can be growing in the ground or in pots. Indoors, this herb can be successful year-round, but will it need grow lights for those who can not offer 5 to 6 hours of bright light from a sunny window?

Oregano also makes a good [companion plant](#) in the vegetable garden.

Read Next

- [A How-to Guide: Companion Planting with Herbs](#)
- [How to Grow Rosemary Plants: The Complete Guide](#)
- [Indoor Herb Garden: How to Get Started!](#)

PLANTING

- Oregano loves the sun, so ensure that your placement has full sun for strong flavor. Offer partial shade if growing in hot climates.
- Plant anytime in the spring, once you're well past the chance of frost. Some folks plant later in the season for assured warm weather. The soil should be around 70°F.
- For a head start, plant the seeds/cuttings 6 to 10 weeks before the last spring frost. ([See local frost dates.](#))

- Oregano can easily be started from seeds, though you can also use cuttings from an established plant.
- Before planting, mix in several inches of organic matter, such as compost. If you're growing in containers, use a quality potting mix.
- Plant 8 to 10 inches apart. The plants will grow 1 to 2 feet tall and spread about 18 inches.

GROWING

- Allow oregano plants to grow to about 4 inches tall and then pinch or trim lightly to encourage a denser and bushier plant. Regular trimming will not only cause the plant to branch again, but also avoid legginess.
- Oregano doesn't need quite as much water as most herbs. As the amount of watering depends on many variables, just water when the soil feels dry to the touch. Remember that it's better to water thoroughly and less often.

- If you have a container, water until the water comes out of the drainage holes in the bottom of the container.
- At the end of the season, you can move pots indoors for the winter; cut dead stems in the spring before new growth. In warmer climates, protect plants with mulch.
- To ensure the best-quality plants, thin out plants that are 3 or 4 years old in the early spring. Oregano is self-seeding, so the plants will easily grow back.
- You can divide the plants in late spring if you want to put one indoors.

Types

- Greek oregano (*Origanum vulgare* var. *hirtum*) for cooking.
- Common oregano for decoration (its white-lavender flowers look pretty in the garden and are also used in wreaths).

HARVESTING

- Harvest the leaves with sharp shears as you need them, once the plant is several inches tall. This will encourage new growth. Just don't harvest more than one-third of the plant at a time.
- The most flavor-filled leaves are found in mid-summer, right before the flowers bloom.
- You can freeze the leaves to use during the winter. Oregano leaves store well and are easily dried. Keep them in an airtight container once dried.

GARDENING PRODUCTS

PESTS/DISEASES

- Root and stem rots
- [Aphids](#)
- [Spider mites](#)

WIT AND WISDOM

- Oregano tea relaxes nerves and settles an upset stomach.
- Fresh oregano is a great antibacterial agent and loaded with antioxidants as well as an excellent source of fiber, vitamin K, iron, vitamin E, and calcium. It was once used in many [old-fashioned herbal remedies](#).
- Oregano plants are said to symbolize “substance.” Find out more about [plant meanings here](#).

RECIPES

GRILLED PORK KABOBS

ITALIAN VEGETABLE SOUP

**LEG OF LAMB ROASTED WITH
WHITE WINE AND HERBS**

**EGGPLANT, ZUCCHINI AND
RED PEPPER STEW**

**SLOW-COOKER TOMATO
SAUCE**

TURKEY-STUFFED EGGPLANT

**ITALIAN VEGETABLE POPOVER
PIZZA**

**BREADED FRIED ZUCCHINI
ROUNDS**

COOKING NOTES

Crush or chop fresh oregano leaves by hand before adding them to a dish to release the flavorful essential oils contained within. Oregano adds savory flavor to pizza, pasta sauce, and Italian soups. But also add oregano to olive oil, vinaigrettes, or marinades for beef, chicken, or lamb. Try it!

For cooked dishes, it's best to add oregano leaves at the end of the cook-

ing process, or they won't hold up well.

For example, add to the end of cooking hearty vegetables such as eggplant and zucchini.

HERBS

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Catherine Boeckmann



Catherine Boeckmann loves nature, stargazing, and gardening so it's not surprising that she and The Old Farmer's Almanac found each other. She leads digital content for the Almanac website, and is also a certified master gardener in the state of Indiana. [Read More from Catherine Boeckmann](#)

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COMMENTS

ADD A COMMENT

Carmen (not verified) 1 year 9 months ago

Which variety would be best for making healing recipes, oils and tinctures? Which variety has the most value?

Thank you

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REPLY

The Editors 1 year 9 months ago

Hi, Carmen. You will want to seek out true Greek oregano. It is prized for both medicinal and culinary uses.

REPLY

Frances Gale (not verified) 4 years 8 months ago

I planted Oregano spring of 2019. It was a wonderful healthy plant which gave me an abundance of oregano to dry, bag and freeze. I share it with my relatives, which makes all of us happy. It overwintered nicely because we had a mild winter. So this year, about the end of June, I decided to let half my plant bolt and go to seed. 1) It is so beautiful with the abundance of tiny white flowers, which keep coming and coming. More importantly, 2) the bees love it. I can tell you about 40 bees are on that oregano plant from the instant it gets warm enough for them until its time for them to "hole up" every single day. I never realized what a great pollinator plant Oregano was. I will be harvesting seeds and putting them in my wildflower/pollinator garden. BTW, I am zone 6 in Idaho.

REPLY

Chris Wiemelt (not verified) 4 years 10 months ago

Recommendations for storing oregano. Do I was the leaves?

REPLY

Elle (not verified) 5 years 2 months ago

My oregano lives in the waterand was doing okay. But for some reason I noticed that the new sprouted leaves are light green in color. Its winter and i place it beside my window.

REPLY

Sandy (not verified) 5 years 11 months ago

I do not understand the difference between Greek Oregano and the decoration one. How do you tell the difference? Are there pictures of them? The one I have looks like the picture above. Thanks in advance.

REPLY

The Editors 5 years 11 months ago

Greek oregano is one of the most common types used in cooking.

Its botanical name is: *Origanum vulgare* var. *hirtum*. There are lots of other oreganos within the same genus *Origanum*, as well as some that are in different genera and not true oreganos, such as Cuban oregano (*Plectranthus amboinicus*). Within the *Origanum* genus, there are several that are used just for ornamental value, and do not have as good or as intense a flavor; most are not used in cooking. For example, *Origanum* 'Kent Beauty', O. 'Amethyst Falls', O. 'Rosenkuppel', O. *vulgare* 'Aureum', or O. *libanoticum*. These are valued for their showier flowers/bracts, or colorful or curly leaves. Some types may have pink or purple flowers and purple, yellow, or bluish leaves. *Origanum vulgare*, the straight species of common oregano (also called wild marjoram), can be invasive and doesn't have as much flavor; its flower is pink or purplish. It has several subspecies/varieties, one

of which is Greek oregano. Greek oregano is a bit more compact, has a more intense flavor, and its flower is white; when the leaves are rubbed, they emit a strong scent. Greek oregano is not as attractive ornamentally as some species/varieties grown specifically for that purpose. Some oreganos will look very similar. Although sometimes plants are mislabeled (several types of oregano are sometimes sold as “Greek” oregano), it always helps to look at a label (if provided) to know which specific plant you are likely purchasing—especially check the botanical name, since common names sometimes are used for different plants. Hope this helps!

REPLY

Becky (not verified) 6 years ago

When does oregano bloom? I planted two of them in pots last spring and they are now huge and really need pruning. In some of the comments, it is suggested that they be pruned just before blooming. So, I would like to wait until they get buds, but don't want to wait too long or they will be two feet high. Thanks for any advice.

REPLY

The Editors 6 years ago

Oregano blooms in mid- to late summer. Prune them in the spring and they will put out new growth for the summer!

REPLY

Sally (not verified) 6 years 11 months ago

I may have over-watered my plant but I don't know for sure. Is my oregano plant gone for good or will it grow back?

REPLY

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