

Thymus serpyllum

Thymus serpyllum, known by the common names of Breckland thyme,[3] Breckland wild thyme, wild thyme, creeping thyme, or elfin thyme, is a species of flowering plant in the mint family Lamiaceae, native to most of Europe and North Africa. It is a low, usually prostrate subshrub growing to 2 cm (1 in) tall with creeping stems up to 10 cm (4 in) long. The oval evergreen leaves are 3–8 mm long. The strongly scented flowers are either lilac, pink-purple, magenta, or a rare white, all 4–6 mm long and produced in clusters. The hardy plant tolerates some pedestrian traffic and produces odors ranging from heavily herbal to lightly lemon, depending on the variety.

Wild thyme is a creeping dwarf evergreen shrub with woody stems and a taproot. It forms matlike plants that root from the nodes of the squarish, limp stems. The leaves are in opposite pairs, nearly stalkless, with linear elliptic round-tipped blades and untoothed margins. The plant sends up erect flowering shoots in summer. The usually pink or mauve flowers have a tube-like calyx and an irregular straight-tubed, hairy corolla. The upper petal is notched and the lower one is larger than the two lateral petals and has three flattened lobes which form a lip. Each flower has four projecting stamens and two fused carpels. The fruit is a dry, four-chambered schizocarp.[4]

Wild thyme is native to the Palearctic realm of Europe and Asia. It is a plant of thin soils and can be found growing on sandy-soiled heaths, rocky outcrops, hills, banks, roadsides and riverside sand banks.

Wild thyme is one of the plants on which both the common blue butterfly and large blue butterfly larvae feed and it is also attractive to bees.[4][5]

The oils of *T. serpyllum* contain thymol, carvacrol, limonene, paracymene, gamma-terpinene and beta-caryophyllene.[6]

Creeping and mounding variants of *T. serpyllum* are used as border plants and ground cover around gardens and stone paths. It may also be used to replace a bluegrass lawn to xeriscape low to moderate foot traffic areas due to its tolerance for low water and poor soils.[7][8][9]

Several cultivars have been produced, of which 'Pink Chintz' has gained the Royal Horticultural Society's Award of Garden Merit.[10][11] A miniature creeping form is 'Elfin'.[12]

var. *albus*

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Thymus serpyllum *coccineus*

Wild thyme in the UBC Botanical Garden

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