

# Did You Know?

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## Oregano, *Origanum* spp.

- The name oregano comes from the Greek oros ganos or “joy of the mountain”.
- Oregano is referred to as the “the prince of herbs” and was first used by the ancient Greek physician Hippocrates.
- Oregano is one of over 200 genera in the Lamiaceae (mint family).
- Growth habits range from mounds 2-3” tall to upright 39” tall plants. All have
- While Oregano and Marjoram are two prominent culinary members of the genus, there are others that are prized for their ornamental flowers, landscape value, medicinal, cosmetic and craft use.
- Za’atar, commonly used in Middle Eastern cooking, is either just one herb or a blend of herbs which varies depending on the region of origin. *O. maru* or *O. syriacum* is the plant referred to as za’atar which has a spicy fragrance and flavor. This plant is also known as Syrian oregano, bible hyssop and Lebanese oregano.
- Oregano was used in brewing beer, to disguise any unpleasant flavors before the use of hops was discovered.
- The amount of the chemical carvacrol (a creosote-scented phenol) in an *Origanum* spp. determines the characteristic or more of a creosote fragrance. This phenol also has anti-bacterial and anti-fungal properties.
- Throughout history, especially in folklore, the name marjoram is used interchangeably to describe both *Origanum majorana* (sweet marjoram) and *Origanum vulgare* (wild marjoram/oregano).
- The organums are associated with love, protection, purification, healing, happiness and steeped in religious tradition and myth.
- In addition to culinary uses, *Origanums* have historically been used for hygiene, fragrance and cleaning.
- Historically, oregano was used to treat respiratory and gastrointestinal disorders, menstrual cramps and urinary tract problems. It was also used topically for various skin conditions as well as drunk as a tea for relaxation and stomach upset.

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