



Greek Oregano – How to Grow:

Oregano is a close relative of marjoram and is also known as pot marjoram. Similar in taste to marjoram, oregano's taste is more pungent and has overtones of mint. Oregano is a half-hardy perennial that can be grown outdoors as an annual or indoors as a perennial. Blooming in early summer, Greek oregano has pink, white, or purple flowers, dark green opposite leaves that are highly aromatic, and slim, squarish, and woody, branched stems. Greek oregano has a branching taproot and grows in a clump. Used the world over in Italian, Mexican, and Spanish dishes, Greek oregano is one of the three essential ingredients in Italian cooking along with basil and marjoram.

Greek oregano grows 24 inches (60 centimeters) tall. Cultivation requirements: does best in light, rich, well-drained soil; requires full sun and a sheltered location; do not overwater and allow the top 1 inch (2.5 centimeters) of soil to dry-out between waterings; pinch off flowers to keep the plant bushy; do not over fertilize. Buy young plants or take cuttings to propagate, as the flavor and aroma of oregano started from seed may be disappointing. Start new oregano plants by layering stems from existing plants. Pin down the stem, cover with soil, and keep moist until you see new growth. Transplant new plants to pots or their new location.

Greek oregano requires at least 5 hours of sunlight a day. If you are growing oregano on a windowsill, turn frequently to ensure that all sides receive equal amounts of light. Oregano can also be grown under fluorescent lights. Hang lights 6 inches (15 centimeters) above the plants and leave on for 14 hours a day.

Oregano In The Garden

In the garden, plant oregano with broccoli to deter the cabbage butterfly. It is a beneficial companion to all plants, improving both flavor and growth. Oregano can be grown in pots in the garden as well as in the soil. In the kitchen, use in pizza, tomato sauces, pasta, hearty soups, omelets, cold bean salads, marinades for meats of all kinds, cheese and egg dishes, and bland vegetables such as zucchini, green beans, eggplant, potatoes, and mushroom dishes. Oregano blends well with garlic, thyme, and basil. Oregano butter can be poured over fish and shellfish just before serving or baking. Oregano has a strong flavor so use sparingly and add during the last 10 minutes of cooking.

To harvest, pick small sprigs as needed. Oregano can be stored by drying. To dry, cut off plants 1 inch (2.5 centimeters) from the ground, tie plants into bunches, and hang in a warm, dry, shady location. After leaves are dry, strip off and store in an airtight container.