

67. ORIGANUM Linnaeus, Sp. Pl. 2: 588. 1753.

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Subshrubs or perennial herbs, gynodioecious, aromatic. Leaves ovate to oblong-ovate, entire to remotely dentate. Spikes cylindrical to oblong, sometimes elongated in fruit, many flowered, overlapping with small bracts, in corymbose panicles; bracts and bracteoles green and purple-red, oblong-obovate to lanceolate. Calyx campanulate, throat villous annulate, ca. 13-veined; teeth 5, subtriangular, subequal, apex acute to obtuse. Corolla white or rose to purple, campanulate, tube exserted, limb 2-lipped; upper lip straight, emarginate; lower lip spreading, 3-lobed, middle lobe larger than lateral lobes. Stamens 4, shorter to slightly longer than upper lip in bisexual flowers, included in pistillate flowers; anthers ovoid, cells 2, separated by triangular cuneate connectives; filaments glabrous. Style exserted, apex unequally 2-cleft. Nutlets ovoid, slightly ribbed, dry, glabrous.

About 15–20 species: primarily in SW and C Asia, one in China.

1. *Origanum vulgare* Linnaeus, Sp. Pl. 2: 590. 1753.

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Origanum creticum Loureiro; *O. normale* D. Don; *O. vulgare* var. *formosanum* Hayata.

Rhizomes oblique, ± woody. Stems erect or prostrate near base, 25–60 cm, purplish, retrorse pubescent or slightly floccose-pubescent, numerous, leafless near base, lower branches sterile. Petiole 2–7 mm; leaf blade ovate to oblong-ovate, 1–4×0.4–1.5 cm, glandular, adaxially shiny green tinged purple, sparsely villous, abaxially densely villous, base broadly cuneate to rounded, margin entire or remotely serrulate, apex obtuse to slightly obtuse. Spikes oblong, ± elongated in fruit; floral leaves mostly sessile, purplish; bracts green or purple, oblong-obovate to obovate or oblanceolate, ca. 5 mm, margin entire, apex acute. Calyx ca. 3 mm, minutely hispid or subglabrous; teeth triangular, ca. 0.5 mm. Corolla purple-red to white, tubular-campanulate, 5–7 mm; tube ca. 5 mm, exserted in bisexual flowers, ca. 3 mm, included in pistillate flowers, sparsely pubescent; upper lip ovate, ca. 1.5 mm, apex 2-lobed; lower lip ca. 2 mm, lobes oblong-ovate. Nutlets brown, ca. 0.6 mm, apex rounded. Fl. Jul-Sep, fr. Oct-Dec.

Hills, grasslands, forests; 500–3600 m. Anhui, Fujian, Gansu, Guangdong, Guizhou, Henan, Hubei, Hunan, Jiangsu, Jiangxi, Shaanxi, Sichuan, Taiwan, Xinjiang, Xizang, Yunnan, Zhejiang [Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia; Africa, Europe, introduced in North America].

A polymorphic species; used medicinally.

