

TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION



Sweet Marjoram Growing Guide
Collin County Master Gardeners Association
<http://collin-tx.tamu.edu> * Collin@ag.tamu.edu

Sweet Marjoram (*Marjorana hortensis*) is a tender perennial (grown as an annual in North Texas) that grows up to 12" tall and wide. It has thin, gray-green leaves and in early summer, small, white or lilac, knot-like flowers appear along the stem. The flavor of the leaves are similar to oregano, but sweeter.

Sweet marjoram is a warm season plant and is consistently hardy in very warm climates where there is no chance of frost. It is best planted in North Texas in late spring to early summer when the soil has fully warmed to 70° and the weather has settled.

Choose a site that provides 6-8 hours of direct sun each day. Soil should be rich, well drained and amended with compost or other organic matter.

Sweet marjoram can be planted by direct seeding, but it is best to get a jump on the season by starting seeds indoors 3-4 weeks before planting time. The seed is very tiny, so the best method is to scatter the seed on turned soil that has been raked smooth, then gently press the seed into the soil. Water gently and carefully and keep the soil moist until the seeds germinate. Seeds germinate in 6 days; when the first true set of leaves appear, thin the seedlings to 12" apart by clipping the extras at the soil line (don't pull out the seedlings as they may affect the root system of the nearby seedlings). Transplants should be placed 12" apart in holes that are the same size as the existing root ball.

Water plants during extended dry spells, but be sure not to over-water as sweet marjoram likes to be slightly dry.

Pick fresh leaves as needed, beginning four weeks after planting. Harvest early in the morning when leaves are turgid (filled with water). This is an herb that keeps its full flavor even when dried. To harvest sweet marjoram for storage over the winter, remove no more than 1/3 of the plant's leaves. When the leaves have thoroughly dried, strip them from the stem and store in a cool, dark place until needed. Harvest can continue through the season when flower buds reappear.

In North Texas plants will sometimes overwinter if covered with a thick layer of mulch. It also propagates readily by cuttings in the fall, or lift plants to grow inside until the weather warms again. Sweet marjoram may be divided in the spring or fall to produce new plants.

The secrets to growing sweet marjoram are warm soil temperature, infrequent watering, and frequent harvesting. Give sweet marjoram a try; this versatile and flavorful herb will soon become a favorite!