

Introduction and Aim of the Work

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1. INTRODUCTION AND AIM OF THE WORK

Lamiaceae (Labiatae) is one of the largest families of angiosperms; being represented in the world by 280 genera and 6700 species in both hemispheres (Boulos, 2002). Species of this family are especially numerous in the Mediterranean and Irano-Turanian regions particularly at high latitudes (Mohammed, 1986). In Egypt Lamiaceae is represented by 22 genera and 56 species (Täckholm, 1974 and Boulos, 2002). Some of its members (*Stachys*, *Lavandula*) are important components of desert communities. Others (*Salvia*, *Marrubium* and *Teucrium*) are common in the Mediterranean coastal areas. In mountaineous areas (south Sinai), other species grow as weeds. Some species grow in moist habitats. About ten species are known to be endemic to Egypt, which represent the highest number of endemic species for any of the families of dicotyledons in the country (Mohammed, 1986).

Medicinal and Economic Importance

Lamiaceae has been known as a group of plants of pharmaceutical interest. A large number of species are rich in aromatic substances, owing to the essential oils secreted by epidermal glands. Species of several genera such as *Lavandula*, *Mentha*, *Ocimum*, *Origanum*, *Rosmarinus* and *Thymus* are cultivated for this purpose. The genera *Mentha* and *Ocimum* are two important members of the family Lamiaceae. *Mentha* belongs to the subfamily Stachyoideae and includes 25 species, three (*Mentha longifolia*, *Mentha spicata* and *Mentha Pulegium*) are scored in the Egyptian flora (Mohammed, 1986). *Ocimum* belongs to the subfamily Ocimoideae, and includes over 150 different species and varieties all over the world. *Ocimum* is only represented in the Egyptian flora by *Ocimum forskölei* (Boulos, 2002).