

OLIVE TREE GROWING GUIDE

Congratulations on becoming an owner of a new olive tree!

Below is a quick guide to getting your tree established and some tips for how to avoid common problems. More information is available at fourwindsgrowers.com. Now that you have unpacked the tree, be sure to remove the plastic bag that keeps the soil in place for shipping.

Location:

Olive trees are an excellent choice for both in the ground and in container growing. These highly adaptable trees will tolerate a variety of soil types including poor, rocky soils. Choose a location with at least 8 to 10 hours of sunlight and use a well-draining soil mix to amend your native soil or plant your potted olive tree. If you live in a location with low temperatures lower than 15°F then you will want to grow your olive tree in a container that can be moved to a protected area during the winter.

Planting:

To plant your Olive tree in the ground, dig a hole deep enough to cover the root ball. We recommend digging a hole in a cone shape and planting the tree to the center of the cone. If your location has heavy clay soil create a mound about 12" above the native soil line with a better draining soil mix of compost and mulch. At the center of the mound, dig a coneshaped hole and plant your tree.

For container growing, you will want to create a soil mix that is 2/3 premium potting soil and 1/3 fine mulch to increase drainage.

When transplanting check for roots collecting at the bottom of the pot. Gently loosen up the roots at the bottom to help them quickly extend into the surrounding soil.

Tamp (pack) down soil several times while backfilling the hole to avoid air pockets. After planting, water the tree to settle the soil firmly around the roots. Make a basin for future watering.

Watering:

The number one reason for olive tree loss in the first 2 years is poor draining soils. Become familiar with how your location drains and amend your soil appropriately where drainage is poor. Olive trees are quite drought tolerant once established but water management in the first 2 years is critical. Good water management includes regular irrigation and mulching to get trees established. Once established olives require little water.

In our California climate, monthly watering for established trees is more than adequate. Olives are incredibly drought resistant and can survive extended dry periods.

Fertilizing:

Fertilize your olive tree with a balanced fertilizer when you water in the spring being sure to keep them away from the tree trunk. Treat the topsoil with fast or slow release 10-10-10 fertilizer following the application instruction to be sure you don't over-apply and burn your tree. Organic fertilizer options like worm castings, compost, and compost tea also make great food for your tree. Be sure to keep all mulches you may add at least 6" away from the trunk to prevent the development of trunk/stem rot.

Pruning:

Olive trees do not require heavy pruning to produce fruit. It is okay to prune to the desired shape but keep in mind that olives fruit on branches that grew the previous season. Removing that one-year wood will certainly reduce your fruit potential. You may also want to remove crossing branches in the interior of the tree that could be creating a habitat for pests and diseases. Remove spoiled fruit, dead, damaged, or diseased branches. Pinching off terminal buds(buds at the tips of a branch or main stem) will encourage more lateral growth and keep your tree shorter to the ground. The goal here is to keep pruning to a minimum.

Pests:

The Olive Fruit Fly can cause serious damage to home growers and orchardists alike. Native to Eastern Africa, the Olive Fruit Fly has spread all over the Mediterranean and even the US. This destructive fly not only feeds exclusively on olive fruits but even lay their eggs into them. This causes the fruit to rot and allows entry to other microorganisms.

There are a few methods used to control the fly, first is sanitation and removing the old fruit remaining on the tree at the end of the season. Organically Acceptable methods include the use of GF-120 Naturalyte Fruit Fly Bait (Spinosad) which kills the adult flies and sprays of kaolin clay which acts as a deterrent.

Mulch:

The use of mulches will conserve precious water and help inhibit weed growth. A 2"-3" layer of wood chips, fir bark, compost, or other organic matter can be very helpful for water retention. "Living mulches" such as nitrogen-fixing clovers can also be planted between trees in an orchard. To avoid root diseases, always keep grasses and other vegetation away from the root collar area. Keep all mulches at least six inches away from the base of the trunk.

Indoor Olives:

Olive trees make beautiful decorative/ornamental trees for indoor growing as well. Indoor olive trees love the full sun so a South/ Southwest facing window would be ideal for providing adequate lighting. Avoid placing your newly potted Olive tree near a heat vent as this has the potential to cook your tree when in use. Regular feeding will be a crucial part of your growing experience, but a monthly dose of Romeo Plant Food should be all your tree needs to stay nice and green year-round. Our Premium Size olive trees shift perfectly into our Decorative Planter Tree Care Kits which make it even easier to plant, feed and protect your new olive tree. keep in mind that Olive trees are drought tolerant and don't require a lot of water. Always check the soil for moisture prior to watering and only water once the soil is dry.