

Olive Trees in England

Olive trees originate from the Mediterranean region and have been grown for their fruit for more than 5,000 years, according to “The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Trees of the Americas” by Tony Russell, Catherine Cutler and Martin Walters. Grown successfully throughout England to the point of becoming a commercial crop, olive trees are surprisingly hardy in the cold weather and some cultivars even need a chill requirement to produce fruit.

Tree Characteristics

Olive trees are evergreen and reach a height of 50 feet although pruning will keep the tree smaller. Olives live for 500 years and will recover if pruned too severely. The leaves are gray-green and the tree's branches are twisted. There are several different cultivars grown in England according to Big Plant Nursery, including cipressino, a very hardy tree that produces black olives; frantoio, which is a self-pollinating tree; hojiblanca, which is tolerant of the cold and manzanillo, which produces blue-black olives.

Planting

Olive trees need well-drained soil with medium to low fertility. East of Eden recommends planting the tree in soil that is low in acid and has a maximum pH of 8.5. Guard against excessive wind by either tying trees down or erecting windbreaks. Plant trees 22 to 40 feet apart and remove any trees planted closer together once the trees mature. Olive trees also do well when planted in containers.

Maintenance

Water olive trees routinely during the growing season, especially in dry weather and during the first two years of life. Garden Grower recommends applying nitrogen fertilizer during the growing season. Olive trees also need adequate amounts of potassium. In colder weather, wrap the trunk with horticultural fleece. Keep the area around the base of the trunk weed-free.

“The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Trees of the Americas”; Tony Russell, Catherine Cutler and Martin Walters; 2005

Big Plant Nursery: Cultivars and Varieties of the Olive Tree
http://www.bigplantnursery.co.uk/olive_cultivars.html

East of Eden: Know Your Olives
http://www.eastofedenplants.co.uk/olive_guide.htm

Garden Grower: Growing Olive Trees
<http://www.garden-grower.com/tree-care/olive-trees.shtml>