



Urban Harvest
Gardening for good.

Olives

Category:	Sub-tropical evergreen; arid Mediterranean
Hardiness:	Withstands normal winter temperatures
Fruit Family:	Stone fruits (drupe)
Light:	Full sun
Size:	12' – 15'H x 12' – 15'W average (for varieties available); may be pruned to desired HxW
Soil:	Well-drained, will not tolerate standing water
Planting:	May be planted year round

Olives are comparatively new in Southeast Texas. They are a valuable landscape tree as well as a fruiting tree. The fruit can be harvested and processed for table use. It is also enjoyed by birds and olives are often planted in habitat gardens.

Care of Olive Trees

Planting: A young olive tree can be planted in the ground or transplanted to a large container for an extended period. If a container is to be its home, step it up several times into increasingly larger containers up to 15-gallons.

Plant in **a very well drained location** that never has standing water after a rain event. The location should also provide good air flow which reduces humidity in the canopy.

Dig a hole that is at least 1 ½ times the diameter of the root ball and at least 1" or 2" shallower than the root ball. Examine the root ball; trim off any broken or circling roots. Set the root ball in the prepared hole. Backfill with the native soil, making sure to break up the clumps and tamp well as you go. The "shoulders" of the root ball will sit slightly above grade, but will be covered by the fill soil. Do not use any amendments at planting. Water well after planting and keep the soil slightly moist, but **never** soggy for the first few weeks.

Pruning: No pruning is needed unless new wood is absent. Thin out deadwood and unproductive wood. Most growers try to spread branches outward and upward at about 60° from the horizontal with plenty of sun penetration in the interior. Pruning should be done in early spring.



Production: Olives may begin fruiting in their third year. Most will reach full production by their tenth year. Rather than requiring chill hours like temperate fruits, olive trees must go through a period of vernalization in order to form bloom buds and set fruit. This requirement is met by being exposed to cool nights (below 50°F and above freezing) followed by warm daytime temperatures (but below 80°F). The varieties differ in the range of tolerable temperatures that will satisfy this requirement, and in how many days of vernalization they need to set fruit. The conditions required to vernalize olives may be absent here in some years, especially in the warmest areas in the city and on the coast.

Watering: Olives are basically an arid climate plant that only requires enough water to keep them alive. Once they are established, normal rainfall is sufficient. If a period of drought occurs, occasional watering will be beneficial. Make sure to water the entire root ball. Olives are relatively shallow rooted.

Fertilization: Olives are not heavy feeders. They will benefit from regular, light fertilization. Fertilize in December to support bud formation, and again in spring when new growth is apparent.

Harvesting: Fruit must be picked just as the olive is turning color from green; when it shows a small patch of pinkish purple and is commencing to soften. It is essential during pickling that the olives must not be bruised in any way, so take care when picking the fruits.

Cold tolerance: Although the olive is the hardiest of the sub-tropical fruits, it can experience damage to leaves and small stems at temperatures below 17°F. More severe damage can occur at 12°F and the tree can be killed to the ground at 10°F. Olives will often re-sprout from the root if they are top-killed. Protect the lower 18" – 24" of the trunk with pipe insulation for the first five years.

Processing: Olives must be processed before consuming them. It is a very simple matter to pickle olives. You will need a small wooden vat or barrel or an earthenware jar with an open top similar to a glazed bread crock. If you are interested the following recipes may be of some assistance to you. Always cover the containers to exclude all light during processing.

Recipe #1. Place olives carefully in container. Prepare a caustic soda solution; 3 oz. of caustic soda to 1 gallon purified or distilled water. Cover the olives with the solution for 40 to 48 hours (no longer). Use using a piece of flat, clean wood to keep them below the surface of the liquid. At the end of 48 hours, pour off the caustic liquid. Cover the olives with fresh purified or distilled water. Pour off the water and replace with fresh purified or distilled water twice daily. Continue the pouring off and replacing of the water twice daily, night and morning, for at least one week; until all caustic soda is eliminated. Do not worry if the olives are bitter to the taste at this point.

Next, mix well 1/2 lb. of salt to one gallon of purified or distilled water. Cover the olives in this solution for a week, then drain. Mix 3/4 lb. salt (12 oz.) to each gallon of purified or distilled water, cover the olives for another week and drain again. Place the olives into jars; A-Gee jars or similar. Place jars in tub of very hot water up to their necks. Make a brine of 3/4 lb of salt to one gallon of water. Bring to a boil. Fill each jar to overflowing with the boiling brine solution and seal immediately. As the jars cool the rubber rings will seal the tin inner lids perfectly and the olives will keep indefinitely.

Recipe #2. Place olives in vat and cover with a caustic soda solution; 1 lb. caustic soda to five gallons of rainwater. Allow to stand for 18 to 20 hours, then pour off the dark brown liquid. Keep washing in rainwater until the water comes away clear, changing the water each day. This will take seven or eight days. Bottle the olives in A-Gee jars or other suitable containers. Stand the jars in tub of very hot water up to their necks. Make a brine of one cup of salt to 12 cups of rainwater. Bring to a boil. Pour the boiling brine solution to overflowing over the olives and seal immediately.

Varieties of Olives for the 2020 Sale

Arbequina

Varieties of Olives for Southeast Texas

Arbequina: This beautiful 12' - 15' tree originated in Spain. It is the earliest of the olives to bear fruit, sometimes at 3 years with full production within ten years. The **small**, dark brown to black fruit has excellent flavor and is used for oil or table fruit. It ripens in mid-fall - November. Self-fruitful, but better when pollenized with Arbosana. Leaf disease susceptible – provide good airflow. It is pest resistant. Frost resistant; hardy to 22° F - 25° F. Damaged by temperatures in the high teens, but has survived 14°.

Arbosana: Can start producing olives after two years, and reaches full fruiting in 5-10 years. Fruits are greenish with yellow overtones at maturity in late November. May bear in alternate years. Requires excellent drainage and thrives in long, hot summers. Pest and disease resistant. Self-fruitful, but better when pollenized with Arbequina. Frost resistant; hardy to 22° F - 25° F.