

# Care of your Olive Tree

## 1) Position your Olive tree carefully

Positioning is everything when it comes to growing Olive trees. An Olive tree needs the sunniest spot available in your garden. It can cope with a bit of shade but too much and your tree will deteriorate. Similarly, it will tolerate a breezy site but it will not thrive if exposed to constant north or easterly winds.

## 2) Give it the right compost

When it comes to soil requirements, Olive trees will tolerate either acid or alkaline conditions but good drainage is important. In pots 50/50 multi-purpose compost and John Innes is ideal but if you have a top heavy tree, just use John Innes with a 20% addition of grit. This will help anchor the tree.

If the tree is going straight into the ground, some multi-purpose compost added to the existing soil will help the tree root faster.

## 3) Feeding the olive tree

Using bonemeal while planting will help the tree to establish a larger root system.

A slow release fertilizer in the spring will give the tree nutrients throughout the growing season and a liquid seaweed through the summer every 2-3 weeks will green up leaf & encourage the fruit.

## 4) Pick a good pot

When growing Olive Trees in containers, terracotta or wood is a preferable choice as these are more 'breathable' and will help with drainage and insulation. A good quality plastic pot however, has the benefit of being more lightweight and less prone to breakage.

## 5) Pruning Olive Trees

This is best done in late Spring once the frosts have passed. If you have a natural head olive tree, it might need a hard prune. If it is becoming very spindly and branches have bolted, a hard prune back will be required. This depends on how tall the tree is but a good 30% would need to be removed. This will encourage the tree to produce new shoots and bush out. A healthy olive tree should be thick and hard to see through. A light prune on an olive tree in late spring will kick start the tree into producing new leaf for the season. Clipped trees can be pruned through spring and summer. A cloud or pom pom tree may require 2 cuts a year to keep the shape tight and thick.

## 6) Keep the soil moist

Although drought tolerant, the restriction of roots growing in a container means olive trees must be watered on a regular basis. The amount of water also depends on what the tree is planted in. Our trees arrive here planted in coir and it helps the trees root quickly but they do dry out extremely fast in warm weather. If your tree is in a peat based or coir compost, a good watering can 3 times a week will be needed through spring and summer. This obviously needs to be reduced as it goes into Autumn and then during winter once every 3 - 4 of weeks if the weather is mild. Don't water an olive tree when there are hard frosts as you run the risk of damaging the roots.

If the tree is planted in a loam based compost, such as John Innes. Grit will need to be added to help excess water drain. Watering will need to be less frequent in this case as John Innes holds moisture far better. The golden rule with watering olive trees is little and often. Please note that when it rains, very little water actually penetrates the canopy and finds its way into the root-ball. Olives that are planted in the ground will also need plenty of water to get started. It can take 3-10 months for an olive tree to root properly. As soon as the tree has rooted, it will be less dependant on you watering it. A really good soak with a hose once planted and a weekly soak will be perfect for the first 2-3 months.

## 7) Be careful in Winter

Whilst Olive Trees are very hardy (and almost indestructible) they need to be ready for life in the British climate. Typically the older the Olive the hardier it becomes, for example a 2ft tall Olive will only survive -4 degrees whilst a large established Gnarled Olive will survive down to -15 degrees. For maximum protection in this extreme type of weather, we suggest wrapping the tree in layers of horticultural fleece until the cold spell has passed.

**Should you have any questions or queries please contact us:**



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