

Growing olive trees

To ensure you give your olive tree the best possible start to life, just follow these criteria:

1. Select the sunniest position possible, ideally south or west facing with some protection from the north and east winds
2. It is essential to plant in free-draining soil that will not become waterlogged during the wetter parts of the year; olives are tolerant of both acidic and alkaline soils. Poor sandy soils will benefit from the addition of organic compost and clay soils may require additional drainage or if this is not feasible, then consider a raised bed. (For a more detailed guide please see our 'soil preparation guide for growing olive trees')
3. Olive trees can successfully grow in containers for many years and while they will grow in most composts, for long-term cultivation we recommend mixing a good quality multipurpose compost 50/50 with John Innes No.3. Never over-pot your olive tree and always re-pot just to a slightly larger pot.
4. Olive trees can be easily pruned to maintain the size and habit required. We recommend that light, formative pruning is undertaken in mid-spring with heavier trimming in early to mid-summer. Never prune during the winter and be cautious in the autumn: like many Mediterranean trees, olives need some heat and recovery time to heal wounds before the dormant winter period.
5. Feed your olive tree with seaweed extract, fortnightly between May and September to ensure the tree stays healthy, vigorous and happy. We use a seaweed product called 'Maxicrop Complete', which includes the growth stimulating seaweed extracts, as well as a good balance supply of essential nutrients. (N:P:K: at 5:5:5.) If you are unable to obtain it locally, you can find it in our web-site shop. <http://www.eastofedenplants.co.uk/products>
6. In areas where the minimum winter temperatures are between -2°C and -5°C, olive trees require no winter protection and will even tolerate drops down to -7°C for short periods, providing the daytime temperature rises sufficiently. In areas of lower winter temperatures, your olive tree can be protected with several layers of horticultural fleece wrapped around the trunk and crown of the tree.

Like many plants grown in pots, olive trees cannot tolerate frozen roots. If this happens, they can suffer drought through not being able to take up water. Worse still, the roots will be damaged which can result in subsequent poor growth or even death of the tree.

If you are worried about a prolonged period of frosts in your area an effective tip is to add several layers of bubble plastic to the inside of the pot when re-potting the plant or simply add layers of bubble plastic to the outside of the pot and secure with tape or garden twine.