

Olives



↑
max. 20 metres
∅
max. 2 metres

Occurrence

The area of origin of the olive tree extends around the Mediterranean Sea. Today the tree is spread all over the world and can generally grow between the 30th and 45th latitude south and north. Olives are cultivated in the Mediterranean region as well as in the Black Sea, in Australia and in California.

Significance

The oldest olive stones found so far date back to the Bronze Age 9,000 years ago. The plant has been cultivated on Crete since around 4,000 BC and has spread rapidly throughout the Mediterranean region. Today, olives and olive oil are an indispensable part of Mediterranean cuisine.

Threats

Olive trees are more susceptible to disease in monocultures. The olive tree is a non-endangered species.

At ForestFinance

Olive trees are planted on the areas prepared by ForestFinance in Errachidia, in eastern Morocco.

Characteristics



Leaves

The elliptic, evergreen leaves are up to 10 cm long and have a firm green upper leaf surface and a silvery green lower leaf surface.



Bark

The olive tree can grow as a tree or shrub. Young trees have a green smooth bark, which develops into a brown-greyish, cracked bark with age.



Fruits

Depending on the olive variety, the stone fruit can grow up to 4 cm wide and 2 cm long. Fully ripened olives are harvested black and ripened olives green.



Flowers

The almost 4 cm long light flowers bloom between the end of April and June.

Olive

FAMILY OLEACEAE

GENUS OLEA

SPECIES OLEA EUROPAEA



Olives

Olive varieties

Over 1,400 varieties are known, of which about 1,000 grow in the Mediterranean region alone. ForestFinance plants the varieties Arbequina and Arbosana in Morocco. Both olive varieties have a high resilience and productivity. Arbequina olives are harvested dark green and have an exotic fresh flavour, whereas the flavour of Arbosana olives is mild and slightly nutty.



Olive

FAMILY *OLEACEAE*
GENUS *OLEA*
SPECIES *OLEA EUROPAEA*

DENSITY

0.7 g/cm³

JANKA HARDNESS

460 lbf

Growth

Olive trees grow on sandy soils, but can also endure nutrient-poor soils. They prefer an arid, sunny climate, must not be watered too much and can even endure short periods of drought.



Yield

An olive tree can live for several hundred years with a life cycle of up to 100 years. A fully productive olive tree can produce 20-30 kg of olives per year.



Use

About 90 per cent of the olives are processed into olive oil. The resulting kernels can be further processed into biomass fuel. The wood is used for furniture, wind instruments or as firewood.



Already in ancient times the olive tree was considered a holy tree of the goddess Athena and the winners of the Olympic Games were presented with an olive wreath. In the Christian faith the olive branch is a symbol of peace.

