

Olive Tree Planting and Care Tips for Baton Rouge and Surrounding Areas

It is not necessary to plant your olive tree in the ground. Trees can be grown in pots on the patio. It makes a lovely addition. (Note: if the patio is concrete and you DO NOT pick the olives and they fall onto the cement, it will STAIN) The larger the pot, the larger your tree will get. In the ground it will grow to maximum height.

To plant in the ground (September or October recommended)

Inspect the soil. If you do not have well drained soil, (in other words, typical Baton Rouge clay!) plant by using the “turtleback” process. To do so:

1. Wet the soil thoroughly where you are planting the tree, and thoroughly wet the soil in the potted tree.
2. Mark the soil level on the pot containing your tree. Use a marker to mark the spot on the outside of the container.
3. Dig the hole half the depth of soil in the pot. The goal is to have the crown of the root ball above the ground to improve drainage. Olive trees have shallow roots with a wide spread.
4. Gently remove the pot from the tree roots.
5. If pot-bound, carefully loosen the roots a bit, and put the olive tree in the hole.
6. Use clay dug from the hole lightly pat into place around the exposed tree roots.
7. Rita sprinkles alfalfa pellets into the clay when she plants. You can buy this where animal feed is sold.
8. When finished, the tree will have a mound of dirt sloping away from the original edge of the olive tree.
9. Water thoroughly to prevent air pockets.
10. For the next few weeks, stick your finger into the soil about two inches to check the moisture level. If dry, water deeply to prevent shock.

Care for Your Tree

Once the tree is in the ground, (or a larger pot) do not use chemical fertilizers to increase leaf production.

1. Fertilize with a light mixture of seaweed, fish emulsion, and molasses every three weeks. (2 gallons of water with one tablespoon of each)
2. Once a year, top dress around the tree drip line with aged manure and/or alfalfa pellets (keep away from the trunk of the tree).

3. Missing nutrients in the soil can cause problems in the amount of fruit and the shape of the fruit your trees produce. For example, if you don't have adequate boron in your soil, your fruit will be misshaped.
4. Water conditions also affect production. After flowering, the trees need to be watered adequately, but take care not to overwater.
5. Using ProTerra®, a SOIL PROBIOTIC, helps with fruit development and helps the plant to better utilize water and fertilizers. I tried this on one tree and got MUCH MORE fruit. Use **ONLY** 1 teaspoon per gallon of water. DO NOT THINK MORE IS BETTER. (You can order ProTerra® at <http://www.earthunlimited.net> and receive a 10% discount by using the code BRHERBS in the appropriate space during the ordering process. The unit will also receive 5% of all sales using the BRHERBS code.)

Cold Hardiness

When temperatures are predicted to fall below 15 degrees for several hours, (very unusual for Baton Rouge weather) spray your trees with water. Ice will form on the leaves and branches to insulate the tree. This is what the strawberry farmers do when they have cold weather. You may have some tip burning, but the tree will survive