

Olive Tree Planting Tips for Baton Rouge

It is not necessary to plant your olive tree in the ground. For the plants sold by the Herb Society of America Baton Rouge Unit in March 2009, you may keep the trees in the original pots for up to 12 to 18 months. At the end of that time, the trees will be ready to either plant in the ground or move into a larger pot. The larger the pot, the larger your tree will get.

To plant in the ground (September or October recommended)

Wet the soil thoroughly where you are planting the tree, and thoroughly wet the soil in the soil in the potted tree.

Inspect the soil. If you do not have well drained soil (in other words, typical Baton Rouge clay!), plant by using the “turtleback” process. When finished the root ball will be slightly elevated from the surrounding soil. Dig the hole about half as deep as the pot. Gently remove the pot from the tree roots. If pot-bound, carefully loosen the roots a bit, and put the olive tree in the hole. Use clay dug from the hole lightly pat into place around the exposed tree roots. When finished, the tree will have a mound of dirt sloping away from the original edge of the olive tree. Water thoroughly to prevent air pockets.

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, do not fertilize to stimulate leaf development for at least six months. Fertilize with a light mixture of seaweed, fish emulsion, and/or molasses every three weeks. 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).

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.

Water conditions also affect production. After flowering, the trees need to be watered adequately.

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.