

Tree Profile: *Olea* - Olive

General information: *Olea* is a genus of about 40 species and native to warm, temperate and tropical regions of southern Europe, Africa, southern Asia and Australasia. It is a tree with strong symbolic importance in Mediterranean countries of abundance and glory, but also of peace. They are evergreen trees and shrubs growing to 10 meters tall, with small opposite narrow dark-green leaves. The bark is light-grey and becomes very gnarled with age. The fruit develops from small white summer flowers to a green changing to black stone fruit.

The most common varieties used for bonsai are *Olea europaea* and the wild growing *Olea europaea oleaster*, as well as the wild *Olea paniculata* which is wide spread throughout Australia growing up to 30 meters tall. Olives can make fantastic bonsai and are one of the favorite and convenient 'yamadori' targets. They survive quite well being dug from the ground or just simply cut off at ground level. New roots shoot quite easily even from a flat surface

Position: Full sun or partial shade in summer - airy for best growth, not be exposed to temperatures below 7°C - protect from frost!

Watering: Moderate, they are more heat and drought tolerant relative to other species. Don't let them dry out, but don't over water either!

Feeding: Fortnightly from spring to autumn, do not feed during the winter. Dynamic lifter and blood & bone can be used and a bit of dolomite lime is great for jumpstarting growth.

Repotting: Every 2-3 years in early spring in free draining slightly alkaline mix for younger trees, older trees only every four to five years. Do not fertilize for three months after repotting!

Pruning: Best time for minor pruning is early spring, pinching back new growth regularly. Major pruning is done in late autumn or winter and the tree will respond with the vigorous growth the following spring. For maintenance pruning cut back to 2 - 3 pair of leaves. Defoliation should be done only if the tree grows vigorous and healthy

Wiring: Olives are very brittle! Wire only when needed in late autumn or winter. Young branches with care and on larger or older branches use raffia!

Propagation: From seed at 13° - 15°C in early spring - soak in hot water or an alkaline solution for 24 hours. Semi-ripe cuttings in summer, leave 2 - 4 sets of leaves on the top and use rooting powder for better results. Also from suckers by division.

Pests and diseases: Aphids, spider mites and especially scale.

Styles: Suitable for all styles and sizes. Olives are prized for the beauty of the aged wood and lends itself well to areas of deadwood as often seen in nature. The wood of the olive rots easily and if there is deadwood on a collected specimen, be sure to treat it with lime sulphur and possibly with additional wood hardener/preserver.

Carving, Jin and Shari: Care **MUST** be taken when carving olive wood with a grinder or Dremel tool as the sawdust can be toxic - treat it like you would when cutting treated pine!



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