

## You Can Grow Olives in Your Yard!

Do you like the idea of growing your own organic food? Would you like the taste of the unusual? A fruit-bearing tree grown in California and in Catalonia Spain has been discovered to be suitable to grow in this area of the south! Think of a small tree with characteristic weeping branches and misty-gray foliage. Think about having something exotic in your landscape. Think of throwing a tarpaulin beneath the shade of this tree and using a wide-toothed rake to drop your home-grown delicacies into your diet. The variety of olive that has slowly and finally emerged into our North Florida landscape is the Arbequina Olive.

Unlike some of the earlier-attempted varieties, the Arbequina is cold hardy, ripens early and does not need another olive tree for pollination. The emerging interest in growing organic food in our own yards makes the Arbequina Olive a perfect choice for the homeowner. It is heat-tolerant. It is drought tolerant and can be planted in a wide range of well-drained soils. Any sunny spot in your yard will work for this evergreen. They are fast



*Illustration 1: Arbequina olives*

growers and will bear in 3 to 4 years. This long-living tree is easily established in well-drained soils. You have the choice of pickling the fruit while it is green or you can allow them to ripen to black for crushing into olive oil. You can also make salted black olives.

The Arbequina Olive offers an opportunity for a feel of the Mediterranean. Like old oak and large pine, this tree offers the grand idea of a past living with the present. What other tree offers the romance of an ancient culture and the practical application of growing something you can also eat? It is estimated that the cultivation of the

olive began seven thousand years ago. Now, in these modern times, even novice gardeners can brag that they have olives that sit on shelves their pantry and olive oil on their kitchen table from the tree they planted in their yard.

The Arbequina Olive responds well to minimal organic fertilizer and rarely suffers from pest or diseases. That means you can grow organic food on your small piece of earth and harvest your own food with a smile on your face. You can plant other historical edibles nearby such as rosemary and oregano for an added Mediterranean touch!

Its willowy crown mixes well with any established landscape. From xeric plantings to tropical gardens, this tree fits in and stands out at the same time. The Arbequina Olive can be shaped as espalier along a wall. They can be grown in containers with minimal pruning. It might even be the secret to peace! Take your pruned olive branch to a neighbor and see if a smile is offered in return.

Written by Vickie Spray. Vickie owns & operates Your Own Garden Expressions which specializes in creating organic gardens for local folks. For further information you can go to her website

<http://yourowngardenexpressions.vpweb.com/>