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Mission

Origin: United States
Purpose: Dual
Cold tolerance: High
Self fertile
Productivity: High
Start of bearing: Intermediate
Ripening: Late
Oil content: High

Growth: Mission is a vigorous variety with an erect growth habit. It is the oldest California variety. Originally from Spain, it spread up the state from Baja California with the establishment of the missions. Its popularity as a table variety has decreased in recent years, but it is a perennial favorite for oil production. It tends to alternate bearing, but this can be minimized somewhat with cultural practices. It is considered very tolerant of cold and salinity, and moderately tolerant of drought.

Pests: Mission is extremely susceptible to peacock spot; untreated street trees in coastal California are almost defoliated during years when the weather favors foliar disease. A consistent preventative program is important to manage the disease and minimize stress on the trees. Mission is also susceptible to verticillium wilt. It is moderately resistant to olive knot, however. It is susceptible to olive fly.

Fruit: This cultivar has a high yield of good quality oil. Aggressively bitter when it is harvested too green, the Mission olive is best harvested for oil when moderately mature. The oil has green notes of pine and mint, and a soft buttery ripe character. Very ripe Mission can be used to create a classic California style of oil usually called Late Harvest Mission. This popular oil has a buttery and tropical fruity quality. Mission is also a popular olive for flavored oils; processed with fresh citrus fruit, it makes a well-balanced flavored oil. Mission is also a good table cultivar. It is freestone and can be harvested green or ripe for a variety of different table olive styles.

Harvest: Mission has a medium removal force. Its upright growth habit makes it well suited to mechanical harvesting. It ripens late and is frequently harvested in the new year for late harvest style oils.