

## Century Old Olive Trees Rescued



Recent studies show that olives and olive oil help to lower levels of bad cholesterol and reduce the risk of heart attacks and certain cancers. The Mediterranean diet which includes plenty of olives and olive oil has long been known as one of the healthiest. Residents of Crete in the Mediterranean have the highest consumption of olive oil per person in the world and they also have the lowest rate of death from heart related diseases in the world. It is no secret that the olive, which has been providing food and medicine to humans for millenniums, is one of the most versatile and life giving trees on earth.

The first record of commercial olive cultivation dates back over 5,000 years to the region of Syria. In the five millenniums from that day, archaeologists have been able to track the spread of the noble olive across the entire Mediterranean basin and beyond. With a possible lifespan of up to 2,000 years, individual olive trees have seen not only generations, but entire kingdoms, come and go on the earth's surface. From Solomon's temple to modern day Tuscany, the olive has had a distinguished career enriching the human race. Countless people have used the olive for an income, food, medicine, heat, light and shade.

On a recent trip to Israel, I was amazed to see 1,000 year old olive trees being successfully transplanted in an effort rescue them from encroaching development. The ability of these beautiful old trees to adapt to the stresses of transplantation is truly amazing. Now, 100+ year old olive trees are being rescued and put back into production at the Trinitas Olive Oil Farm in Calaveras County. The trees are carefully dug up with a backhoe and promptly transported to their new home. Over the past several years, these rescued trees have enjoyed nearly perfect success in their recovery. It is wonderful to see this important part of our agricultural history being so carefully preserved.

This article adapted from Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service, USDA. Please contact Ken Churches at [cdcalaveras@ucdavis.edu](mailto:cdcalaveras@ucdavis.edu) or (209) 754-6475 with your agricultural questions. To speak with a Certified Master Gardener: Calaveras (209) 754-2880, Tuolumne (209) 533-5696, Amador (209) 223-6837, El Dorado (530) 621-5543.