



Olives

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Olives have been held in high regard since ancient times partly due to their ability to bear large amounts of fruit, commonly used to produce olive oil.

Olive as a Commercial Crop

Cultivation of olives in commercial groves and home gardens has been well established for many years. There is also a growing interest in expanding the olive industry to supply an increasing demand both locally and internationally, through local production. While such enterprises are becoming popular throughout the state, there are a number of environmental and planning issues that need to be considered.

Olive as a Weed

One of the advantages of olives as a commercial crop is the large amount of fruit they produce. However, this can be a disadvantage as the fruit is easily spread with the potential to germinate and establish in undesirable areas as wild olives. Olive fruit is commonly eaten by birds and foxes who subsequently spread the seed to establish on roadsides, in native vegetation and in abandoned pastures. It is essential to ensure all fruit is picked from cultivated olives to prevent their spread. Wild olives cause serious environmental damage in native vegetation where they quickly dominate and smother out most low and medium storey species (see photo). This is of particular concern in the 6th Creek catchment due to the large areas of existing native vegetation.

Due to their high levels of oil, olives are also highly flammable and can create a serious fire risk.

In the Mt Lofty Ranges, wild olives are proclaimed under the *Animal and Plant Control Act*, which requires any spread of olives from olive plantations to be controlled.

Planning Issues

To plant a new olive grove in areas where olives have not previously been grown is classed as a change of land use and requires planning approval by Local Government. To ensure olive plantations are not established in inappropriate areas, the Mount Lofty Ranges Animal & Plant Control Board (MLRAPCB) has assessed their Board area into different risk classifications.

In the 6th Creek catchment, the threat to native vegetation is one of the major considerations when determining any planning application. The catchment has a high risk classification and any planning application for the establishment of olive plantations is not likely to be supported by the MLRAPCB. Although the establishment of olive plantations may appear to be a lucrative industry, before becoming involved it would be wise to research all planning and environmental issues before proceeding with any major investment.

