

[WELCOME](#)[LOCATION](#)[GROVE](#)[PROCESSING FACILITY](#)[QUALITY & SAFETY](#)[OUR RANGE](#)[EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL](#)[COMPANY PROFILE](#)[NEWS](#)[CONTACT](#)

# The remarkable story of the Helena

Australia's first  
International Agriculture  
Winner!

## Raw versus cured?

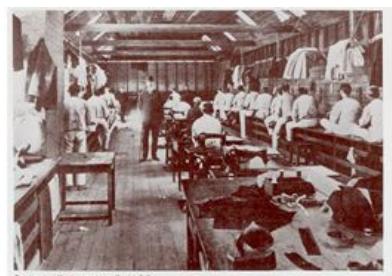
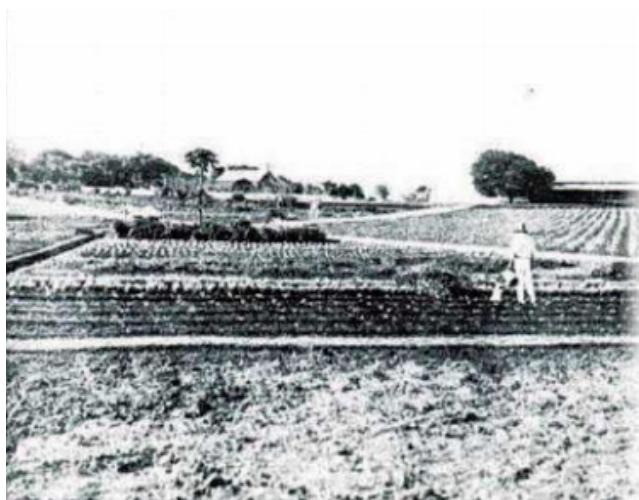
The olive itself is quite simply the fruit of the olive tree. But unlike most fruits, the olive is never eaten in its raw state. The high percentage of glucosides naturally found in the raw olive makes it incredibly bitter. Anyone who has tasted a fresh olive will testify to its bitterness. For the olive to become edible, the bitterness must be drawn from the olive, through curing.

## est. Queensland's St Helena Island

St Helena Island, Moreton Bay, being a self-funded penal settlement, had a commercial grove of olive trees in the early 1900's. Prisoners had to grow their own food and sell produce to purchase goods and equipment. Remarkably, one of their most popular products was their locally grown and processed olive oil, being exported directly to Italy.

St Helena Penal Establishment was proclaimed in May 1867 and was a high security prison for long-term inmates until the 1920s, when it was decided to wind down the prison. It then functioned as a prison farm until it closed in December 1932.

In fact there is a Helena Olive Tree variety that has been preserved from the penal settlement and is said to be very similar to a Frantoio. It is believed that its olives won Australia's first international agricultural award. Today, olive trees still fruit on St Helena Island.



## Did you know?

The colour of an olive indicates the stage of ripeness at which it was picked. Green olives are olives picked before they are ripe. They should have a firm texture and nutty flavor. What we refer to as "black" olives actually light brown, to shades of red and purple, all the way to deepest black. As a general rule, the darker the olive, the riper it was when it was picked.

The exception to this rule is the canned "black-ripe" olive. These olives are picked green, then pumped with oxygen to turn them black, their new colour fixed with ferrous gluconate. Since they have virtually no taste, it is impossible to put them in the same class as you would any other olive.



Recently in 2013, a local Brisbane resident, Trisha Anderson, discovered this watercolour wrapped up in plastic and towels hidden in a wardrobe of her Hendra home. Her grandfather, William Gall, was a comptroller of the Queensland prisons in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. One of his jobs was to regularly travel to and inspect St Helena Island...the painting was presented to him when he retired in the early 1920's. She later learned that this is the **only** painting of St Helena Island in existence. This rare treasure was donated to the Museum of Brisbane and is claimed to be one of the most exciting finds in the last 10 years by local historians. It was painted by 33 year old inmate, Charles Winn in 1878.

---

## St Helena Olive – Now here is a plant with both a wonderful story and exceptional fruit.

Now here is plant with a rich and interesting history. The original *Helena Olive* was planted in the late 1800's on St Helena Island, located off the coast of Brisbane in Moreton Bay. This island operated as a high security prison from 1867 to the 1920's, and is today a heritage National Park. The original olive made its way from Europe to the Island, via a magistrate, and has continued to thrive in the testing Moreton Bay environment.

Today, this plant is a 3rd generation heritage tree, which not only offers a wonderful story, but also exceptional fruit and award winning olive oil. The *Helena Olive* will fruit in the South East Queensland climate, which for an olive is impressive in itself. Suitable for in the garden or on the patio in a pot, the *Helena Olive* is a beautiful looking tree that will add a little bit of Queensland history to your garden.

It is also worth noting that 5 cents from every plant sold goes to Queensland Parks and Wildlife to ensure the ongoing preservation of the historic structures on St Helena Island.



Photograph Noel Burdette:

A new cultivar that has grown in popularity in recent years under the name of "**St Helena**" as seen a dramatic increase in the use of these trees in our backyards .

Having been originally grown on St Helena Island in Moreton Bay for over the past 100 years, it has truly proved itself to be an outstanding performer for our climate. So successful was this original grove planted out by the warden of the prison on the island at the time that the fruit was shipped back to Italy!

Now we can all own a little piece of this heritage listed grove by planting our own "St Helena" olive in our own backyards.

---

Sources: Australian Olive Gower, 1997; St Helena Island Education Centre; Brisbane Times Dec 10, 2013; Bush Garden Nursery 2012; Noel