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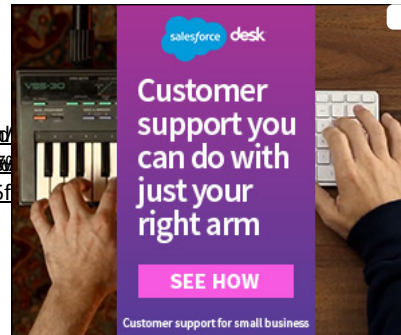
Olive

This page is about the meaning, origin and characteristic of the symbol, emblem, seal, sign, flag or logo of Olive. NEW (justadded.php) RANDOM (random.php)

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Olives are one of the most ubiquitous crops of the Mediterranean region, having been cultivated there for at least five thousand years. Not only were they a major staple of local diets, but also highly symbolic to the peoples and cultures living in the area. This article will address not just the fruit itself, but the oil produced from it and the tree from which it grows, since the symbolism of all three are interconnected.



All around the Mediterranean, the olive was as much a utilitarian product as a culinary staple. Not only was its fruit eaten, its oil was used for any number of purposes; besides cooking, it found use as medicine, illumination and anointing in religious rituals. The branches and leaves of the olive tree were also woven into crowns and wreaths as symbols of victory, and these were presented to triumphant Olympic athletes and courageous soldiers.

One of the most famous stories related to olives in the region has to do with the founding of one of its greatest cities. In the western Greek region of Attica, a contest was held to see which god would be the patron of the city. Poseidon, god of the seas, produced a spring out the ground as a gift to the people, but the water of this spring

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proved unfit for drinking. Athena, goddess of wisdom, planted an olive tree that could provide food, wood and oil for the people. Therefore, the city was named Athens in her honor, and ever since then the olive has been one of Athena's primary attributes.

Another major appearance of the olive comes in the Old Testament's Book of Genesis. Once the disaster of the flood had been averted, Noah sent a dove out from the Ark to locate dry land, and it returned clutching an olive branch in its beak. This iconic image has since become a universal symbol of peace and harmony, appearing in many different forms throughout the years. The Book of Deuteronomy also describes olives as being one of seven primary crops (along with grapes, figs, dates, barley, wheat and pomegranates) associated with the land of Israel, demonstrating just how significant olives were to the peoples of the Mediterranean region.

In general, the olive is also considered a symbol of longevity, as the trees can live to a great age and still produce fruit.

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