



OLIVE NOTES

Agriculture & Natural Resources



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Irrigation

High temperatures and longer days have caused olive trees to use soil moisture at a rapid rate in recent weeks. If you haven't already irrigated, you should be planning for irrigation soon.

Our foothill soils are shallow, rocky, and therefore, have a limited soil water reservoir. This means that shortly after rainfall ceases, the available water in the soil profile will be used up very quickly. We are currently in an important stage for the developing olive bloom. Tree stress now can adversely affect your bloom and fruit set.

In olives, water stress during the spring floral development period increases pistil abortion which results in flowers with only male parts, no little olive inside, and reduces the number of inflorescence and flowers formed. Stress following bloom can result in increased natural fruit drop.

By forty-five days after full bloom, fruit drop has ended and fruit number will remain nearly constant until harvest.

If trees run out of water, all growth processes are adversely affected. Less shoot growth this year will mean a lighter set of fruit next year. Don't let water stress make alternate bearing problems more severe.

Scheduling Irrigations

For a complete discussion of the water budget method of irrigation scheduling, call our office and ask for the free publication "Scheduling Irrigations in Butte County Evergreen Orchards". This leaflet contains tables on water use that can be used to plan an entire season's irrigation schedule based on your orchard conditions and historical weekly tree water use.

Fertilizer Application

Now is the time to apply nitrogen fertilizers. Additional rain or irrigation following the application will move the nutrients into the root zone. Tree nutrition can be further checked with a leaf analysis this coming July. The three nutrients that are most likely deficient in our area are nitrogen, potassium, and boron. If any one of these elements is deficient your olive trees will not be able to produce at the maximum level.

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