

Psychologist, Illustrator Turns her Eyes to Olives

When Dr. Sandy Winoker lived in New York, her job titles were psychologist and book illustrator. But after returning to Texas in 1996, she branched off in another direction.

She bought acreage south of San Antonio near Elmendorf, which she named Sandy Oaks Orchard, and two years later began planting a lot of olive trees.

"I saw a lot of (olive) trees when I traveled. In Italy one summer I lived amongst the olive trees," she recalls. "It came to me that this would be a very good crop for Texas."

Olive trees, she says, have fairly simple requirements.

They can grow in either alkaline or acidic soil and they can take temperatures as low as 14 degrees Fahrenheit. They do not need a lot of water. What they do need is good drainage, which the sandy soil south of San Antonio offers.

Last year, Sandy harvested the first crop of olives at her 40-acre orchard. Though the yield was, as expected, small she says the

prospects of making the orchard a viable business are "looking very promising."

Most of Sandy's trees are arbequinas, which are as small as a nicoise olive but rounder and paler.¹ Additionally, a variety of Arbequinas can be planted very close together. But she has more than a dozen other varieties in the orchard, which now numbers 10,000 trees.

At a small nursery near the orchard, she sells a number of varieties to small and large-scale olive growers. One or two trees can provide enough olives for a family to enjoy and share with friends. Placed in a pot, olives make an attractive addition to a patio

landscape.

On October 30, Sandy will conduct a tour of her orchard and discuss the olive-growing business. Tour goers are free to bring food and stay afterward for a picnic under the trees. To register for the tour, call 657-8866.

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¹ Fletcher, Janet. "OLIVES." San Francisco Chronicle 15 Dec 2004 21 Sep 2008 <<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/c/a/2004/12/15/FDGI3A68B61.DTL&type=printable>>.