



### Glossary

**Gift:** a present

**Credit with:** recognised as

**Flood:** an overflow of a large amount of water beyond its normal limits

### What does the olive tree symbolize?

The olive tree, known by the botanical name of *Olea europea*, is commonly found in Mediterranean countries.

The olive tree grows slowly. When allowed time to develop and age naturally, the trunk can sometimes become quite large in diameter.

What gives the olive tree a special role among other trees is its strong symbolic importance. The olive tree had many uses which were highly valued by ancient societies. It was also regarded as a **gift** from the gods. As a gift from the gods it was considered sacred to many peoples and their gods.

Historically, the olive tree was a symbol of peace. By the 5th century BC in Ancient Greece the olive tree had become a symbol of peace. The Greek goddess Athena was associated with the olive tree as she was **credited with** giving it to the Greeks.

In the Bible, olive branches were used to signal the end of a conflict or the approval of a higher power. According to the Old Testament, God sent Noah a dove with an olive branch in its mouth to inform him of the end of the **flood**. In the Koran, olives, among other fruits, were cited as one of Allah's gifts to his people.

Still today, to "extend an olive branch" is to make an attempt to end a conflict. The flag of the United Nations depicts the world with two olive branches on either side, symbolizing its goal of world peace.

(Adapted from: What does the Olive Tree symbolize?, [www.reference.com](http://www.reference.com), 2014)



Logo of the United Nations.



 **Understanding the text**

1. Find adjectives and terms in the text that are associated with the following words.

- ..... name
- ..... countries
- ..... growth
- ..... development
- ..... diameter
- ..... of peace
- ..... branch
- ..... uses

2. Read the text again and answer the following questions. Use some of the word associations from the previous exercise.

1. Where in the world did the olive originate?

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2. What are the characteristics of this tree?

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3. How was it regarded in the past? Why?

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4. Does the olive tree still have a symbolic significance today? Explain how and why.

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 **Understanding the text**

3. There are many trees, plants and flowers that have symbolic meaning. Research some other example and find information on the following:

- name of tree/plant/flower;
- symbolic meaning;
- historical origins.



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