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Established 1973

## LEWIS HORTICULTURE

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## Olives growing and managing frost strategies for the future.

Changing weather patterns in Australia has seen olive growing regions previously considered not at risk to severe frost now being threatened with frosts which question the viability of establishing further olives in these regions. With strong growth in demand for olive oil both locally and internationally growers need to consider carefully the risks involved in expanding plantings further.

Utilising early to mature olive varieties combined with nutritional and management techniques are approaches that minimize the risks of crop damage.

### 1. Plant early to harvest olive varieties

The planting of early to mature olive varieties such as the low vigour variety Signore will **advance harvest date by around 4 to 6 weeks** compared with main stream varieties like Frantio, Barnea or Arbequina and in most cases allow harvest to be completed before the first frosts occur in the season. By utilizing the low vigour olive variety Signore also allows you to achieve considerably lower cost of production of around 59% while achieving up to 35% higher yields when compared with traditional mainstream varieties.

### 2. Nutritional management

The use of early to mature olive varieties like Signore allows the use of foliar sprays of Potassium to be utilized after harvest that act to change the nutrient balance in the tree and thicken cell walls and increasing tolerance to cold.

### 3. Grove management

- Keep tree line areas moist. Damp soil will keep warmer so provide a greater frost protection than dry soil once harvest has been completed.
- Maintain inter-row areas mown to improve soil warming from the sun during the day
- Folia application of anti-transpirants such as Envy has been reported to give up to 4C frost protection. These would need to be re-applied every 4 weeks during the frost season and more often in spring as growth increases.
- Delay pruning to late winter to minimize tree re growth until frosts are past.
- Avoid planting new groves in low lying areas and plant after frosts have finished to allow trees to be established before next winter.
- Reduce nitrogen applications prior to winter but ensure trees are well nourished to withstand stress of cold.
- Frost fans may need to be considered but represent a substantial investment.

## Grove Management, Tree Supply & Consultancy

PROPRIETOR : HARTOLM PTY.LTD as trustee for the LEWIS LANDSCAPING SERVICE & NURSERIES UNIT TRUST