

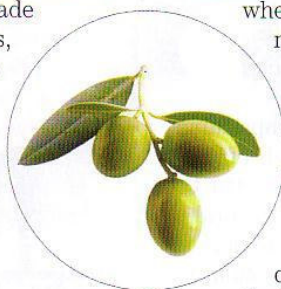
olive leaf.

This immune-boosting plant is a must-have for every medicine cabinet, says naturopath **Bridget Carmady**.

Move over wheatgrass, olive leaf (*Olea europaea*) is the new green 'superfood'. Its use dates back centuries; there are even references to it in the Bible: "the fruits thereof [the olive tree] shall be for food, and the leaves thereof for medicine." In recent years, science has verified many of its traditional applications, and it has been made into liquid extracts, tablets, capsules and teas, as well as added to culinary seasoning mixes and beauty products – it's even fed to cattle to produce award-winning steaks.

Health benefits

Olive leaf is an exceptionally powerful antioxidant, 400 per cent more potent than vitamin C. This antioxidant action protects the body from free radical damage and premature ageing, as well as heart disease and cancer. In a 2007 study in the *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine* (31:1), 55 medicinal herbs were tested for their antioxidant capacity, and olive leaf came out on top. It also contains a range of valuable nutrients,



including vitamin C, beta-carotene, zinc, iron, selenium, chromium and amino acids.

DIABETES Olive leaf (OLE) has been shown to regulate blood sugar and insulin levels, which may help in the treatment of diabetes. It is a popular choice in Morocco, where 80 per cent of people surveyed used herbal medicine for treatment of their diabetes and olive leaf was one of the most popular. Animal studies show promising results, including reductions in blood glucose levels and improved insulin resistance.

INFECTIONS OLE is well known for its ability to help ward off colds and flu; it is also useful for athlete's foot and candida. OLE contains phenolic compounds – oleuropein, hydroxytyrosol and tyrosol – which have all powerful antimicrobial and anti-inflammatory actions.

GOUT OLE shows positive results in treating gout and in reducing fluid retention, by causing an increase in urinary output and decreased blood uric acid levels without disrupting blood levels of important minerals, like potassium and sodium.

HELP YOUR HEART

Olive leaf extract (OLE) is useful in helping to reduce blood pressure, dilate coronary blood vessels, regulate heartbeat, lower blood-sugar levels, plus it is a diuretic. In a study in *Phytotherapy Research* (22:9), OLE significantly reduced blood pressure and cholesterol levels over a two-month period. Studies also indicate that OLE has a beneficial effect on atherosclerosis (the narrowing and hardening of arteries). In other research, patients taking beta-blockers for hypertension noted that gastric symptoms disappeared while they took OLE.

CANCER OLE could potentially help in the fight against cancer. A 2006 Australian laboratory test showed that, at least in a test tube, OLE was fatal to human breast and prostate cancer cells.

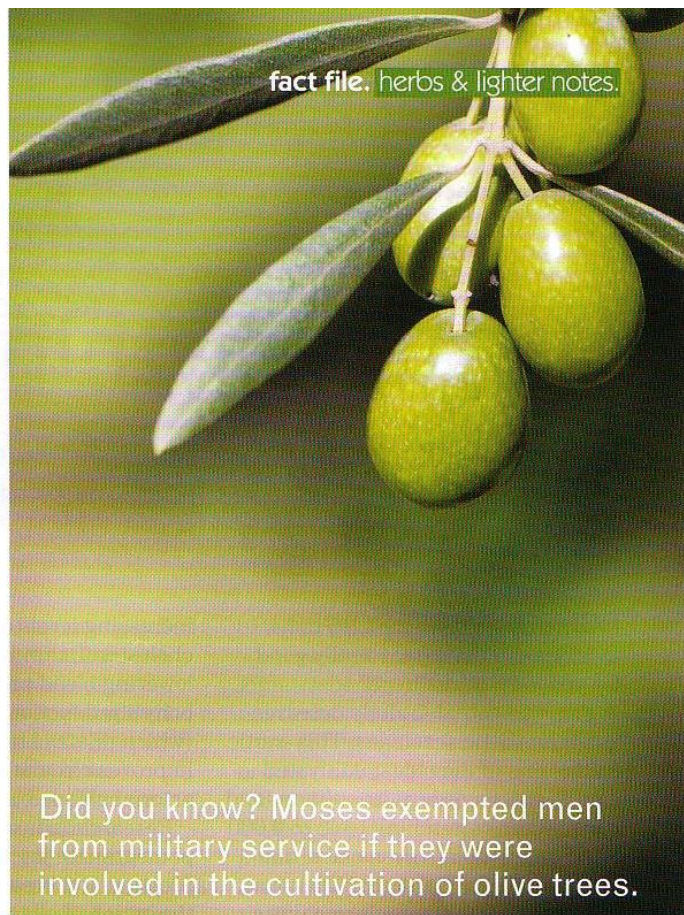
What to look for

Choose OLE preparations that contain only fresh olive leaves, and no additives. Manufacturers recommend around 5 ml three times daily. For children, halve this amount. Anyone with an Oleaceae allergy should avoid OLE. Its safety during pregnancy is not established.



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fact file. herbs & lighter notes.



Did you know? Moses exempted men from military service if they were involved in the cultivation of olive trees.