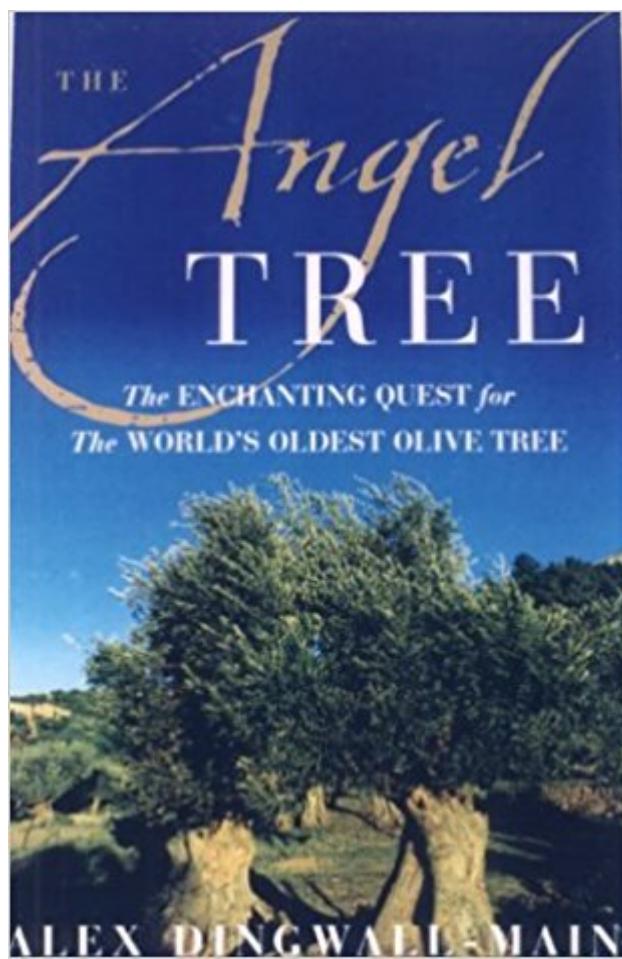


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# The Angel Tree: The Enchanting Quest For The World's Oldest Olive Tree



## Synopsis

Quests are nothing new for travel writers. Some have toiled over a villa restoration in Tuscany. Some have pursued exotic culinary adventures. Alex Dingwall-Main, a landscape architect by day, introduces plant-purchasing as a grand pursuit in his new book *The Angel Tree: The Enchanting Quest for the World's Oldest Olive Tree*. Despite the title, the Dingwall-Main doesn't necessarily need to find the oldest tree<sup>1</sup>; but at a minimum he must procure one that is ancient enough (say 1,000-1,500 years<sup>1</sup>; olives can live extraordinarily long lives) and pretty enough to satisfy his wealthy client, Monsieur Lautour. Dingwall-Main finds several promising subjects, including the Angel Tree of the title; frustratingly, though, the locals sometimes can't be moved to part with the most revered trees for a mere monetary reward. In addition to recounting his shopping expeditions, the author brings in snippets of European history (covering such diverse topics as the Punic wars between Rome and Carthage and the Black Death) to illustrate the turbulent times through which these old trees have survived. He then fills in the rest of the book with tidbits from the life of a well-to-do garden designer. Some readers may simply enjoy living vicariously through Dingwall-Main as he crisscrosses the Mediterranean in search of Lautour's tree, but others could find themselves asking if his description of test-driving a Mini-Cooper is really necessary, or wondering what kind of person packs formal wear on a trip to buy a plant. The Angel Tree does illuminate one fascinating aspect of life in Southern Europe: old olive trees are considered a must-have accessory for the gardens of the rich. This is a boon to farmers who can sell past-their-prime trees for top dollar. Dingwall-Main also shows a humorous touch, especially as he relates one incident in which, due to a careless delivery driver, an acquaintance's newly purchased tree falls into her swimming pool. At its best, *The Angel Tree* serves as an interesting, though perhaps unnecessary reminder of what wealth can accomplish. With enough money, not only can we possess something that has lived through centuries of Western history, but (with a little luck) we can have it perfectly situated in our garden. --Leah Weathersby

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Quests are nothing new for travel writers. Some have toiled over a villa restoration in Tuscany. Some have pursued exotic culinary adventures. Alex Dingwall-Main, a landscape architect by day, introduces plant-purchasing as a grand pursuit in his new book *The Angel Tree: The Enchanting Quest for the World's Oldest Olive Tree*. Despite the title, the Dingwall-Main doesn't necessarily need to find the oldest tree; but at a minimum he must procure one that is ancient enough (say 1,000-1,500 years; olives can live extraordinarily long lives) and pretty enough to satisfy his wealthy client, Monsieur Lautour. Dingwall-Main finds several promising subjects, including the Angel Tree of the title; frustratingly, though, the locals sometimes can't be moved to part with the most revered trees for a mere monetary reward. In addition to recounting his shopping expeditions, the author brings in snippets of European history (covering such diverse topics as the Punic wars between Rome and Carthage and the Black Death) to illustrate the turbulent times through which these old trees have survived. He then fills in the rest of the book with tidbits from the life of a well-to-do garden designer. Some readers may simply enjoy living vicariously through Dingwall-Main as he crisscrosses the Mediterranean in search of Lautour's tree, but others could find themselves asking if his description of test-driving a Mini-Cooper is really necessary, or wondering what kind of person packs formal wear on a trip to buy a plant. The Angel Tree does illuminate one fascinating aspect of life in Southern Europe: old olive trees are considered a must-have accessory for the gardens of the rich. This is a boon to farmers who can sell past-their-prime trees for top dollar. Dingwall-Main also shows a humorous touch, especially as he relates one incident in which, due to a careless delivery driver, an acquaintance's newly purchased tree falls into her swimming pool. At its best, *The Angel Tree* serves as an interesting, though perhaps unnecessary reminder of what wealth can accomplish. With enough money, not only can we possess something that has lived through centuries of Western history, but (with a little luck) we can have it perfectly situated in our garden. --Leah Weathersby

Most people wanting to buy a tree for their front yard simply head down to their local nursery, but

Regis Latour isn't most people: he's a megamillionaire, and his front yard is the focal point of a breathtaking estate in the Provencal mountains. The tree, then, can't be just any tree: it has to be the world's oldest living olive tree. So begins the odyssey undertaken by Dingwall-Main, an inventive and intrepid landscape architect who travels throughout Europe and the Greek Isles in search of the perfect specimen. He finally stumbles upon a 2,300-year-old olive tree situated in a remote Spanish village. One problem: the tree isn't for sale. Such an obstacle is par for the course, as Dingwall-Main recounts his captivating escapades teeming with nefarious nurserymen, suspicious salesmen, and viperous villagers loathe to lose their venerated old tree. Call it Monty Python meets Gertrude Jekyll. Dingwall-Main's hilarious horticultural homage to all things olea is an equally wacky, off-the-beaten-track travelogue and a perfect escape for gardeners and gallivanters alike. Carol Haggas

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This book has no pictures in it. How can you have a book titled Quest for the worlds Oldest Olive tree without having any pictures in it? Seems like more of story book with a few sketches. At least I didn't pay much for it.

I liked this book so much I decided I must have an olive tree. And I have one now. A little Bonsai Tuscan Olive Tree.

Food fans of the humble olive will find here not another predictable olive cookbook, of which several are on the market already, but a unique history of the olive tree and a documentation of the quest for the world's oldest olive tree. Strangely enough, a fender-bending encounter between landscape architect Dingwall-Main and a rich Frenchman in Provence led to this horticultural exploration, which could have been featured in our gardening section, but deserves coverage here for its fine focus on olive tree and olive growing history in France, Spain and other European nations. The Angel Tree is simply enchanting.

great writer, but hilarious recombinant words are scattered all over the place: "he imports olive trees from Spam" !!! hahaha, that's vegetarian spam to you. that should have read Spain. "stonkmg" stonking? i dont even know what stonking means. "wouldht" wouldnt? i can't wait for more.

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