

Mediterranean regions

This is a one of the least common climate types but is found in at least five major areas around the world; California, Western Cape in South Africa, part of Chile, in South Australia and a corner of Western Australia, as well as in countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea.

Typical characteristics of Mediterranean regions include:

- Countries which lie between 30-45° north and south of the Equator
- Hot, dry summers
- Cooler, wet winters but an average temperature of 10°C and above. This means vegetation will grow even in winter months.
- Vegetation which adapts to dry summer conditions by conserving water.
- A range of fruit grown as cash crops such as grapes, peaches, citrus, cherries, apricots, almonds and figs.
- The ability to grow olives: it is generally accepted that growing olives marks the true area of the Mediterranean climate.

Fruit and vegetables form an important part of the economy of the Mediterranean climate areas and much of this is exported around the world. However, in some places occasional frost pockets occur in valleys where the fruit is grown. If this happens when the trees are in blossom, serious damage can result. Fruit farmers often light fires or stoves amongst the trees to keep the air temperatures above freezing in order to save the fruit. About every ten years or so there is a very poor harvest due to frosting of the blossom.

In the Mediterranean countries such as Italy, Spain and Greece, terraces are constructed to grow olive trees. Some of these trees are over 100 years old and are passed down from generation to generation. When ripe, the olives are shaken into large nets which are held up beneath the trees. Olives can be sold fresh or pickled, and the best quality ones are often pressed to obtain olive oil which is sometimes called 'liquid gold'.

When this climate is found in coastal areas it helps to attract visitors who enjoy the warm sun and dry air together with the seaside attractions. Many cities and villages on the coasts have developed a significant tourist industry with a season that can last all year.

Useful websites:

http://www.uwsp.edu/geo/faculty/ritter/geog101/textbook/climate_systems/mediterranean.html
http://www.bbc.co.uk/weather/features/weatherbasics/zones_mediterranean.shtml

<http://www.mediterraneangardensociety.org/climate/>

As well as an explanation of the climate, this site has pictures of what the vegetation looks like in Mediterranean regions around the world.

<http://www.deliciousitaly.com/olives.htm>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Olive_oil

These two sites have lots of information about types of olive oil.