

INFORMATION

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A Guide To BONSAI CULTURE

We are pleased to offer you expert advice on purchasing and caring for Bonsai Trees.

As Bonsai Trees are becoming increasingly popular, we try to offer a wide choice of plants, both evergreen & deciduous, easy as well as rare.

WE ALSO STOCK A WIDE RANGE OF POTS, TOOLS & COMPOST TO COMPLETE YOUR HOBBY - PLEASE ASK FOR DETAILS



RE-POTTING As Bonsai are grown in small pots, occasional re-potting will be necessary to provide fresh soil and this should be done in Autumn or Spring. Small trees, especially deciduous ones, require re-potting every second year, but older trees only every third or fourth year.

Turn the Bonsai out of the pot and remove about 60% of the soil, being careful not to damage the roots. Trim off any roots which appear to be damaged or which are too vigorous - taking care to leave as many fine roots as possible. (See section *Keeping them small*)

CONTAINERS Mature Bonsai are usually planted in containers which are wider than high. In fact the wider the container is in relation to its height, the more artistic the tree will look. Whatever container is used . . .
It Must Have Good Drainage.

The tree should not be planted in the centre of the container; a more picturesque effect is obtained by planting towards one side and placing a small rock in the space. Place a layer of gravel at the bottom of the container and over this a layer of compost. The roots should then be spread out over the compost and the container filled. The soil should then be packed round the roots of the tree and then piled up round the trunk of the tree. This allows deeper roots to be accommodated in a shallow container.

Do Not Add Fertilizer At This Stage.

A little fancy gravel or moss placed on the surface of the soil will also help to improve the effect. All these little extras can transform a tree in a pot into a miniature landscape. Now add water slowly until the compost is well soaked and allow to drain. The Bonsai should now be placed in a shady spot for about two weeks. If planted or re-potted in Nov/Dec, ensure that the tree is kept indoors from winter cold.

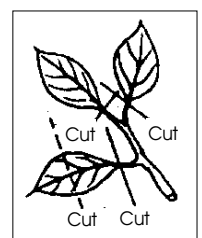
These instructions have completely avoided the use of Japanese words such as the Bonsai expert would employ to classify the many different styles of Bonsai, as there is no need for complex terminology for the novice to produce an acceptable Bonsai. These instructions have been made as simple as possible and if they are carefully followed, even beginners will succeed in raising beautiful little trees in miniature.

COMPOST Because only a small amount of soil is used, it is essential that care is taken in its preparation. The medium should consist of a mixture of average garden soil, leaf mould or peat and a little sand. The resulting mixture should be fairly light and must not settle into a solid 'mud pie' when watered. The mixing in of fine gravel as used in aquariums is beneficial with soggy soil.

LEAVES & LEAF CUTTING

Many young deciduous trees produce leaves which are out of proportion to the size of tree and leaf cutting is one method of reducing leaf size. If a tree is healthy and producing healthy growth, the leaves may be cut off entirely using sharp scissors, but leave the leaf stalks on the tree. These will wither and drop off in 2-3 weeks, to be followed by a second and more plentiful growth of smaller leaves.

This is usually done in June, giving the tree a false Autumn with time to grow again before the true Autumn. Note: A tree with poor growth or weak branches should have only half the leaf removed.



WIRING This is done to change the shape of the tree, controlling the shape and direction of the branches and trunk so that the tree attains a shape pleasing to the owner. The wire should be fairly soft but strong enough to hold the trunk and branches in the shape required. Copper wire or galvanised wire are both suitable and for small branches, plastic covered wire is ideal. The wire should be wound diagonally around the trunk or branch but not too tightly, especially in the case of young trees, or the wire will cut into the bark. When you have wrapped the wire round in a spiral, gently bend it into the desired shape. Leave small branches wired for two to three months and larger ones for six to twelve months unless the wire begins to cut into the bark. Wiring the trunk is easier done when the tree is out of the pot and it is therefore done between October and March. Branches can be wired from April to June.



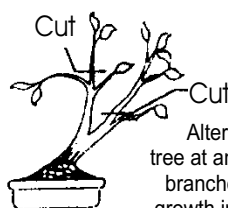
Diagram showing typical wiring of a Beech Tree

KEEPING THEM SMALL - PRUNING

A Bonsai should develop a trunk which looks old, but should also have vigorous growth in the branches and foliage.

ROOTS The roots require trimming when the tree is re-potted. Vigorous roots such as the tap-root, must be cut back using a sharp knife or scissors. Cut the root at an angle, avoiding crushing the root, otherwise it will begin to rot. Also remove any rotting root or any root which is getting too long. Always ensure that plenty of fine roots are left on the plant.

BRANCHES Prune these in the Autumn or in the Spring. It is necessary to remove surplus or overlong branches to balance the tree and improve its appearance. At this stage, care is needed as the future shape of the tree is going to be affected. Carefully consider which shoots and branches form the best shape before removing the surplus.



Alternatively, plant tree at an angle and prune branches to encourage growth in other branches.

The tree would then develop thus:-



BUDS & SHOOTS - Deciduous Trees

These should be trimmed or nipped from time to time to prevent thickening of branches and it is done between April and October. Bud trimming should be done before the buds develop into leaves and small scissors or the fingernails are used.

BUDS & SHOOTS - Coniferous Trees

These should be cut back by approx. one or two thirds between mid April and mid June. Two - three weeks later, new buds will begin to grow where the originals were removed. The growth resulting from the new bud will not grow as large as the original. Any tree which does not show signs of vigorous growth, should not be touched until it begins to recover.

BUDS & SHOOTS - Fruit Flowering Trees

Allow the spring buds to grow until mid June and then prune the vigorous ones where the stem joins the leaf. Do not confuse ordinary shoots with flower or fruit buds you do not wish to prune.

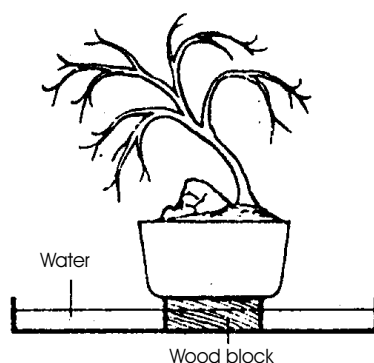
WATERING

Due care is needed indoors - just bear in mind that a Bonsai is a living plant and not an ornament. Heat and dryness are the worst enemies. Keep it in a cool, airy position and as far away from fires and radiators as possible. If kept as a houseplant, the Bonsai will benefit from being placed outside in gentle rain (provided that the weather is not too cold). Do this as often as you can. Because of the amount of soil in the pot, Bonsai require frequent watering. The most common reason for failure with Bonsai is lack of attention to this vital point. Do not wait until the soil is dry before adding water. The amount of water will vary; in the Spring and Summer, more water will be needed than in the Autumn and Winter, although if kept indoors in the Winter, frequent watering will still be necessary even though the trees are dormant. Also remember that it is not sufficient to water the soil only.

The foliage must be sprayed with water regularly to wash away dust and to help reduce loss of moisture by evaporation from the leaves. This is essential in centrally heated houses and in hot weather and should be done several times a week or once a day or even more frequently in extreme cases.

To ensure that the tree is sufficiently watered, do not be afraid of immersing the pot and soil block totally in water. Wait until all air bubbles stop rising and then allow to drain - this may be done once a week.

An additional help in very dry conditions, is the use of a larger outer container holding water in which the Bonsai stands on a block of wood to keep it out of the water. The water evaporates providing a cooler, moister atmosphere around the Bonsai.



FEEDING

In late April, a small amount of fertilizer should be added with a second application in May. A further feeding of deciduous trees in late October and coniferous trees in late September or October will be beneficial. Do not overfeed, although flowering trees will require a little more than others.

IMPORTANT It is recommended that rain water is used to water trees. In districts where tap water is 'hard', this is essential.