

Plants that make ideal bonsai trees:

- Acer - (Maples)
- Celtis - (Stinkwoods)
- Olea - (Olive)
- Pyracantha - (Firethorn)
- Cotoneaster
- Serrisa
- Ficus - (Fig)
- Myrtus - (Myrtle)
- Punica - (Pomergranite)
- Ulmus - (Elm)
- Acacias - (Thorn trees)
(only certain varieties)
- Certain conifers
- Podocarpus - (Yellowwood)

Happy Gardening!



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Bonsai

GardenCare
guide
to the
planting
and care of
Bonsai



GardenCare[™]



An introduction to Bonsai

The Japanese word "bonsai" is translated to "tree in a bowl" and is an art form symbolising many things. To some it is considered the link between heaven and earth, to others it symbolises the balance between man and nature.

In ancient Chinese society, bonsai was a hobby reserved for the aristocracy and only in the 17th century was the hobby taken up by the rest of the population. Bonsai trees were handed down as heirlooms, such was the importance vested in them.

Placement of Plants

Ideally bonsai should be placed outdoors but they will grow indoors if there is sufficient light. Plants need sufficient UV rays in order to survive. The ideal would be to have them in a protected area outside, where they would receive good light and protection from frost and bright sunlight. If your bonsai are going to be inside, it is best to leave them on a windowsill. In order to protect the plant from frost, move it during the winter nights and make sure your plant never stands in a draft.

Watering

Watering is probably the most important aspect in the care of bonsai. When you first buy a bonsai, submerge it carefully in a basin of room temperature water. Let

it stand to soak for a while. Remove it carefully and allow it to stand and drain for 5 minutes and then place it in its new position. This procedure should be followed every second week during the summer.

Every day your bonsai needs water and it should be watered from the top, taking care not to wash away the soil. This watering should take place in the morning. Afternoon watering should be avoided if at all possible.

In the winter a bonsai will only need water every second day but make a habit of checking your bonsai daily.

Fertilising

The best food for bonsai is an organic food. Nitrosol is a tried and tested supplement that will not burn the plant. All the elements needed to sustain healthy growth are found in this product.

In the summer months, feed every 2 weeks. In winter, the bonsai will only need to be fed once. Feeding should only be done after watering. Remember never to feed a sick or dry plant.

Pruning and Repotting

The ideal time to prune bonsai is in late winter, while the tree is dormant. All the unwanted growth is removed and the plant is shaped. During the growing season,

any new, unwanted growth can be removed. This process is called leaf nipping. It is best to let at least three sets of leaves develop before you nip out the growing tip. This helps to shape the tree but also encourages the lower branches to grow stronger. It is possible to obtain branch cutters that are concave, producing a shallow indentation that ages to look natural.

Repotting is carried out every 2 years. If possible the same container should be used and only in the second repotting should a slightly larger container be used. Allow the bonsai to dry out slightly so the plant is easy to lift out of its container. Carefully remove some of the soil that is around the roots. Any dead or damaged roots should be cut away. Cut away about a third of the healthy roots. Make sure there is a mesh covering the drainage holes in the pot. Add a thin layer of gravel to aid drainage. Place a layer of bonsai soil on top of the gravel. Place the bonsai into the dish and pack fresh soil around the plant. Gently firm the soil down. The surface groundcover should now be planted. Water the plant thoroughly and leave it in a protected area for approximately one month. The feeding routine can then resume as normal.

Companion plants are ideal "water indicators". They will suffer before your tree does. Peace-in-the-home has a shallow root system, while Scripus (Cats Whiskers) has a deeper root system. If either plant dies - remedy your watering immediately.