

Botanical Bonsai

Bonsai After Care

Growing Bonsai From Seed

Growing Bonsai from seed is a real test of patients but is very rewarding.

It can take up to 3 years before you have a tree you can start working on, but growing your own bonsai from seed gives you complete control over the health and development of your tree. It is also much cheaper than buying one which may become a sickly plant due to incorrect feeding and training when it was younger.



Development

Before propagating seeds, it's important to understand the development of a bonsai.

Image 1 - Tree at 1 year old.

No pruning or wiring until plants are at least 3 years old but they can be re-potted.

Image 2 - Tree at 5 years old.

Now re-potted. The roots and growth have been pruned and the trunk has been wired.

Image 3 - Tree at 10 years old.

From now on the tree should be re-potted ever 5 years and growth pruned and trained every autumn.

Image 4 - Tree at 15 years old.

Continued training and pruning will start to shape the tree.

Watering The Bonsai

The biggest killer of Bonsai is improper watering. Getting the watering right for your Bonsai is essential to the health and survival of your tree.

Bonsai need to be watered only once every two or three days. The soil of your Bonsai pot must be damp, not dry or wet.

The best time to water is early in the morning or at the end of the day when the temperature is at its coolest. During summer you may need to water more frequently - if so water in the morning and in the evening.

It's good practice to soak water your Bonsai pots once or twice a week. Simply submerge the pot into a bowl of tepid water. This forces out all the stale air and releases nutrients stored in the soil.

When the pot is taken out of the water bowl, water drains out from the bottom of the bowl and fresh air, oxygen and nutrients flow down to the roots.

Another way of keeping your bonsai hydrated is by adding a thin layer of slate chippings to the top of the pot. Water evaporates quicker from potted plants than it does from the ground.



Pruning Bonsai

All Bonsai require a certain level of maintenance pruning throughout the year. If you have a Bonsai, which produces flowers, it will also help to encourage more blossoms. Structural pruning should be carried out in autumn and the early parts of winter, as the plant begins to go dormant and you begin to see the fine branching of the tree.

There are two primary approaches to pruning...

1. Structural Pruning - this is driven by an artistic need to shape and coax the tree into a new form.

2. Maintenance Pruning - this is horticultural in nature enriches plant growth and vitality by encouraging new shoot development and ensuring the bonsai tree does not become too big for its pot.

Shoot, Leaf & Branch Pruning - key shaping in Bonsai training. Without shoot pruning your Bonsai will quickly lose its shape and outgrow its pot rapidly. Use a sharp pair of long handled scissors and cut back twigs that have 5-6 sets of leaf on them.

Small Twig Pruning - occasionally you need to thin out the crown that has got too much foliage and growth to allow more light and air to reach the lower branches.

Identify the branches and twigs; remove them with a pair of strong scissors or branch cutters. Remove any dead wood and stubs left from last season.

Budding and Pinching - the removal of the tips of the growing needles to encourage more branching and create a more compact shape.

Leave up to 3 needles that are growing in the desired direction and pinch out the strongest of the buds.



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