

# BONSAI

Bonsai is the centuries old Japanese art of pruning and shaping plants into miniature. Bonsai (pronounced bone-sigh) is not a particular species of tree, but can be produced from many varieties, especially those with small leaves that will be in scale with the rest of the plant.

**Placement.** Placement can vary depending on the type of plant you would like to bonsai. Most bonsai varieties prefer outdoor locations during good weather, although some like the tropical and sub-tropical plants, may be grown indoors year-round. Indoors, avoid areas with strong drafts or dry heat, like near heat vents, and use a pebble tray to add humidity.

**Watering.** The main cause of bonsai failure is improper watering. Both too much and too little water is detrimental. Because bonsai live in such a restricted amount of soil, they must be checked daily for dryness. How often your plant will require watering will depend on many factors and can vary from summer to winter. Allow the soil of your bonsai to dry down, but never allow the soil to completely dry out.

**Fertilization.** During the active growing season of March-September, feed your plant weekly with a water-soluble fertilizer.

## DIFFERENT VARIETIES OF BONSAI WILL REQUIRE SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT CARE:

**Tropical Bonsai.** Include Ficus, Schefflera, Fukien Tea, Buttonwood and Bougainvillea, among others. Tropical bonsai would prefer to be outside during the summer months in light shade, filtered sun, or morning sun. When indoors, keep your tropical in or near a window; bright, indirect light is best. If you cannot provide enough light in the winter, we suggest supplementing with a grow light.

**Sub-Tropical Bonsai.** Include Serissa, Bush Cherry, Okinawan Holly, New Zealand Tea Trees and Catlin Elms, among others. Sub-tropical bonsai need to be grown in very good light. Put your bonsai outside from late spring through fall. Morning or filtered sun is best. Although some can tolerate full sun, depending on the plant. When indoors, keep your sub-tropical in or near a window; bright, indirect light is best. If you cannot provide enough light in the winter, we suggest supplementing with a grow light.

**Deciduous Bonsai.** These are plants that will drop their leaves each fall, including Japanese Maples, Chinese Elm, Beech, Hornbeam, Crabapple and Ginkgo, among others. Deciduous bonsai must be grown outside from spring through fall. When night temperatures are consistently between 30-40 degrees you should move your plant into a protected, unheated location like garage, window well, or cold frame. The temperatures should be below 50 degrees but stay above freezing. Under these conditions, your bonsai will go dormant and will not need light, however you must not forget to check for water. Do not allow the plant to ever dry out completely. Move the plant back outside when the danger of frost is over.

**Juniper Bonsai.** These need as much direct sunlight as possible. Try to put your juniper outdoors once temperatures are above 45 degrees and leave out all summer and fall. When night temperatures are consistently between 30-40 degrees you should move your plant into a protected, unheated location like a garage, window well or cold frame. The temperatures should be below 50 degrees but stay above freezing. If your Juniper must be kept indoors, keep it on an open windowsill when possible.

**Conifer Bonsai.** These are varieties of cone bearing evergreens, such as Spruce, Pine, Cedar, Cypress, Hemlock and Larch, among others. Most conifers are very cold-hardy and can be grown outdoors in all but the coldest weather but cannot tolerate cold wind. When night temperatures are consistently below freezing you should move your plant into a protected, unheated location like a garage, window well or cold frame. Check regularly for water; do not allow bonsai plants to completely dry out. When night temperatures are above freezing, move your bonsai back outside, gradually acclimating it to the sun to avoid burning.



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