


Welcome to the art and culture of bonsai. Practicing bonsai can help us develop a deeper appreciation for the natural world and for our fellow human beings. Bonsai require patience, diligence, responsibility, creativity, and awareness, among other things. It is not always easy, yet bonsai can enrich our lives with beauty and inspiration. If you pay attention to your bonsai and take good care of it, you will enjoy it for many years. It's up to you! We can help you if you have questions.



DECIDUOUS BONSAI

Deciduous refers to trees that will drop their leaves in the fall, and leaf out again in the spring. They can dazzle us with their fresh, delicate growth in the spring, and vibrant, fiery colors in the fall. They are cold-hardy trees which cannot be grown indoors. Deciduous trees which produce small leaves and twiggy branching are well-suited to bonsai culture. These include Japanese Maple, Hornbeam, Trident Maple, Dwarf Crabapple, Wisteria, Japanese Beech, Zelkova, some Elm varieties, and many more.

WATER




No single watering schedule can be applied to bonsai. Bonsai can dry out quickly because they are planted in coarse soil and in shallow containers. In some cases, you may need to water every day, *however*, the frequency of watering depends on the type of tree, size of pot, type of soil, climate conditions, and more. The best way to tell if the bonsai needs water is to feel the soil. Stick your finger a half inch or so into the soil. Overall, if you do not feel much moisture in the top half inch of the soil, then it's time to water.

You must soak it well. Take the bonsai to the sink, and either let it sit in the water for a few minutes (until it has soaked up enough from the drainage holes in the bottom), or shower from above, letting the water drain through several times. *Never* let the soil dry out completely, but don't keep it soaking wet all the time. Base your watering on how the soil feels. If you are not sure if it is wet or dry, take the bonsai to the sink and soak it well. Feel it an hour later, two hours later, four hours later, etc. This can help you understand how the soil dries down.

Check it every day. If you can feel moisture, then you may not need to water. However, if your bonsai is in a very small pot and/or it is a hot or windy day, or if the bonsai is pot-bound, then you may need to water. Better safe than sorry. Feel the soil in several areas. If one part is dry, then you need to water that part.

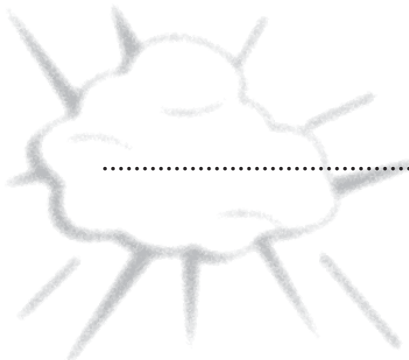
Never let the bonsai get too dry!

LIGHT




Most deciduous trees are happiest growing in a half-day of full sun, or in dappled shade. Some can take full sun all day. Please provide your deciduous bonsai with some sun—they do not like to be in full shade as a rule. When the bonsai is dormant and in its winter location, it will not need a lot of light.

AIR



Always keep your deciduous bonsai in good air circulation. Even when it is in its winter location, it is helpful to have some moving air. This increases cell growth, helps to keep the tree strong, and reduces the likelihood of disease.

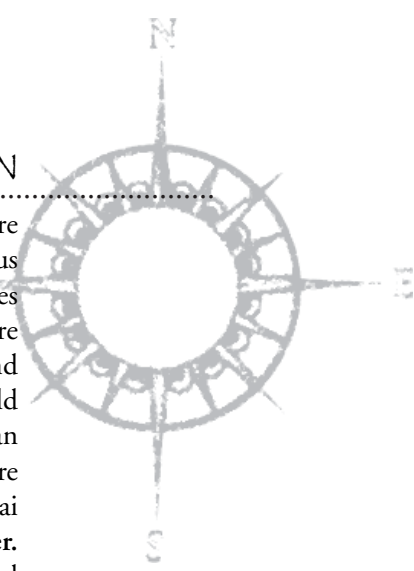
FERTILIZING



When your bonsai start to push out fresh, light-green growth, it is time to start feeding. Apply mild organic fertilizer in the form of pellets or liquid, usually with equal parts nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium (NPK) during the growing season, and less nitrogen in the fall. Apply the pellets about once a month, and the liquid about every two weeks. Once the growth of the tree starts to slow down in mid to late summer, you can cut the fertilizer back to once a month for the liquid. When the bonsai is in winter dormancy, there is no need to feed it. Remember, never fertilize a weak tree.

LOCATION

Deciduous trees cannot be grown inside. The best time to acquire one is in the spring, when you can put it outside safely. Most deciduous trees can go outside in at least a half-day of sun when the temperatures are 35°F and above. They can stay outside until the temperatures are around freezing consistently. Here in New England, that is around the third week in November. At this point, the tree needs to stay cold but protected. It cannot sit outside all winter. You could put it in an unheated attached garage or three-season porch, or any place where it doesn't get too cold (below 20°F consistently), and where the bonsai will be protected from harsh wind and sun. **Don't forget to water.** Some people bury their hardy trees in the ground in a well-protected area. This is riskier, since you have less control over conditions. A place that is bright (although light is not as important when the tree is dormant), well-ventilated, and between 32° and 45°F is ideal. Remember, there are many different varieties of deciduous bonsai. Some are more winter-hardy than others. Also, a weak or recently transplanted tree will be less hardy than a vigorous, well-rooted tree. All these factors must be taken into consideration when you are deciding where your bonsai will go for the winter. In spring, when the temperatures outside are just above freezing, you can move your deciduous trees back outside. If there is a cold snap and the temperatures fall below freezing, you should bring them back in until the temperature goes above freezing again. This is especially important if the buds have opened into leaves. As soon as you notice the new buds starting to swell, you must put the tree in a place where it gets plenty of light, but is not too warm. In warmer parts of the country (where the temperature never goes below 30°F or so), you can leave your deciduous bonsai outside all year.

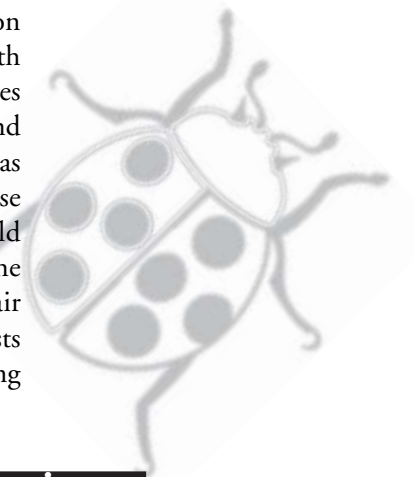


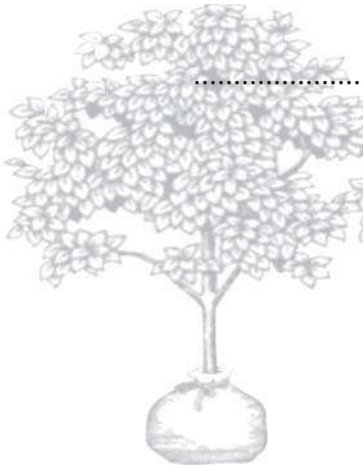
CLEANLINESS

As your bonsai grows, it will naturally shed some leaves. Always remove dead leaves from the tree and from the top soil, and gently shower down the foliage once a week. This will help discourage pests and diseases.

PESTS AND DISEASES

Most deciduous bonsai are fairly pest-resistant. You may see some aphids (sucking insects which leave a sticky residue as they feed) on the tender new growth in the spring. Simply wash them off with water, and then apply a mild insecticidal soap. Some deciduous trees are apt to get fungus on the leaves, especially in wet climates and poor air circulation. This will look like white powder, or appear as blue, black or red spots on the leaves. Severely affected leaves—those more than half damaged—should be cut off. Spray with a mild fungicide such as liquid copper (always follow the directions on the label of any pesticide or fungicide). Keep the bonsai in good air circulation, and do not mist if it has a fungus. Learn to identify pests and diseases and treat accordingly. If you suspect something is wrong with your bonsai, please call us right away.



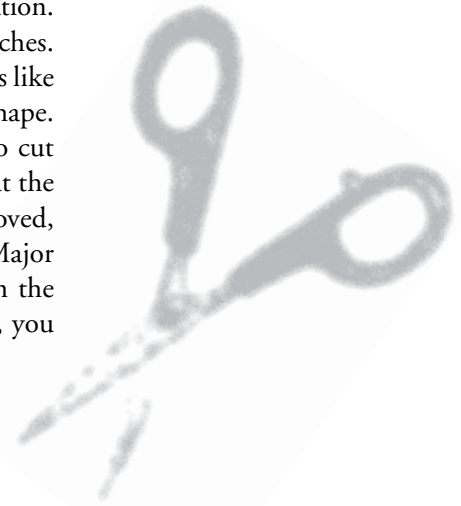


REPOTTING

The safest time to transplant deciduous bonsai is when the new buds are just beginning to swell, before they open into leaves. This can happen anytime from February on, and it can happen quickly, so keep a close eye on your tree. Once the buds have opened into leaves, it is too late to cut the roots. Frequency of repotting depends on the size and age of the tree, the condition of the roots, and other factors. A younger tree may need transplanting every year. Older trees, or those in larger pots, may need repotting every two to four years. Repotting is an important procedure which usually involves root pruning, and must be done properly. We can help you with this. You can also take a workshop or consult a reliable book, bonsai hobbyist, or local bonsai club.

PRUNING AND SHAPING

Deciduous bonsai must be pruned, and sometimes bud-pinned regularly during the growing season to maintain branch ramification. Different varieties require slightly different methods and approaches. How often you trim will depend on how fast your tree grows. It's like a haircut: you trim the foliage when it starts to look out of shape. The key is to never cut so much as to weaken the tree, but to cut enough to keep it well-shaped. Sucker growth, which appears at the base of the trunk and in the 'elbows' of the tree, can be removed, unless you want to cultivate a branch or trunk in that area. Major pruning is usually done when the bonsai is at its strongest, in the early spring to early summer. If you need help with trimming, you can always visit or give us a call.



DESIGN AND STYLING

The very best, most beautiful bonsai are those which look natural. If you observe aged trees in their native environment, you can feel their character and strength. This is the ideal that we strive for in bonsai. Leafy, deciduous trees make excellent broom-style, informal upright, and slanting-style bonsai. They are also recommended for forest plantings. Naturally, they can have beautiful fall color, so they are frequently potted in glazed containers.



NEW ENGLAND



BONSAI
Gardens

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