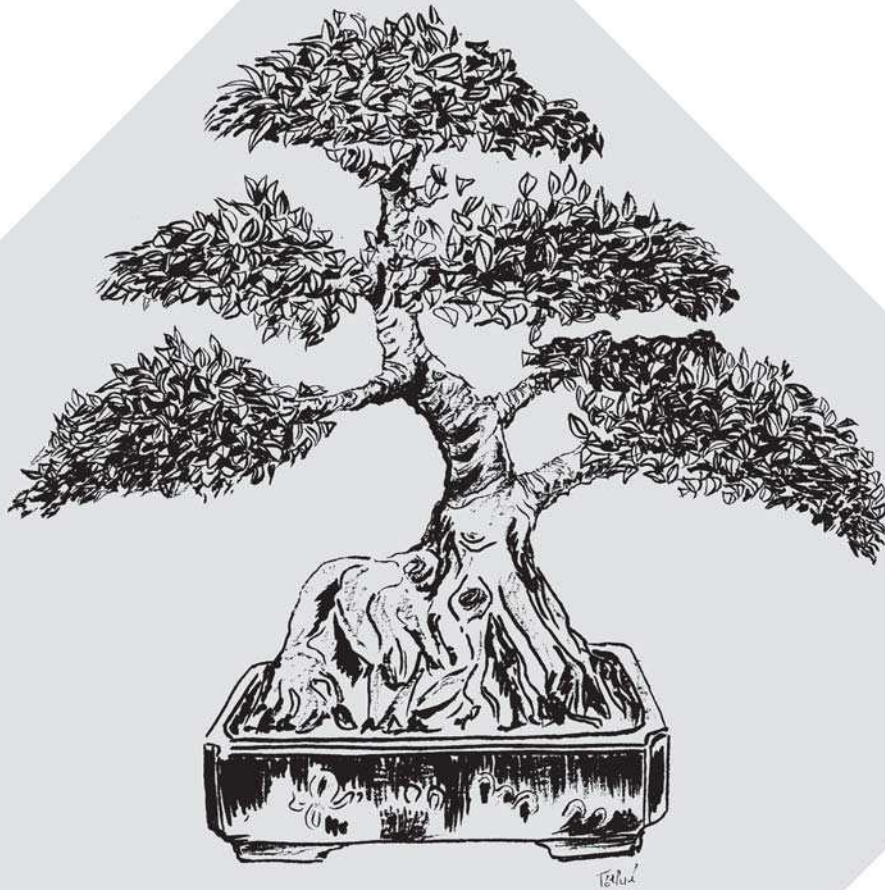


Welcome to the art and culture of bonsai. Practicing bonsai can help us develop a deeper appreciation for the natural world and for our fellow human beings. Bonsai require patience, diligence, responsibility, creativity, and awareness, among other things. It is not always easy, yet bonsai can enrich 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.



# TROPICAL BONSAI

Tropical trees make excellent indoor bonsai. Native to the tropical regions of the world, they generally do not tolerate temperatures below 45°F. All tropicals prefer plenty of sun, and temperatures above 60°F. Varieties suitable for bonsai culture include: Fujian Tea, Brazilian Rain Tree, Schefflera, Portulacaria, Bougainvillea, Buttonwood, Ficus, and many more. Sometimes we refer to tropicals as 'indoor' bonsai. This means that most are adaptable to year-round indoor growth, but prefer to be outside for the summer.

## WATER

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**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

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Recreate the tropics for your bonsai by putting it in a warm, bright window. Some varieties can tolerate less light than others, but in general, if your tree is acclimated, it can take lots of sun, indoors or out. Remember not to put an indoor tree directly into sun when it first goes outside; adjust to the sun little by little, so the leaves don't burn.



## FERTILIZING

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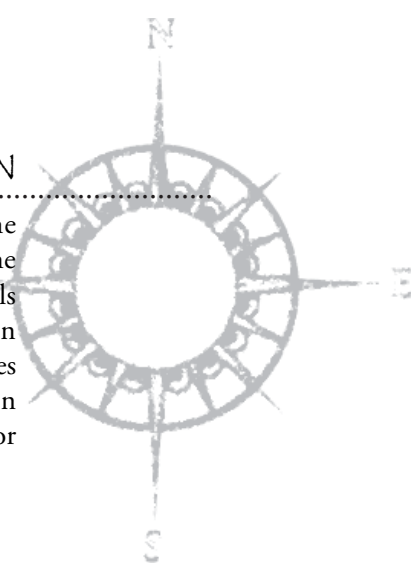
Feed your tropical bonsai when it is actively growing. This is usually in spring and summer. If the tree is outside, use Green King® or other organic pellets, or a liquid fish and seaweed mix. If the tree is inside, use a balanced, weak solution formulated for bonsai (such as Pokon®) or a half-strength solution of any 10-10-10 fertilizer. Do not over-fertilize, and never feed a weak or stressed tree.



## LOCATION

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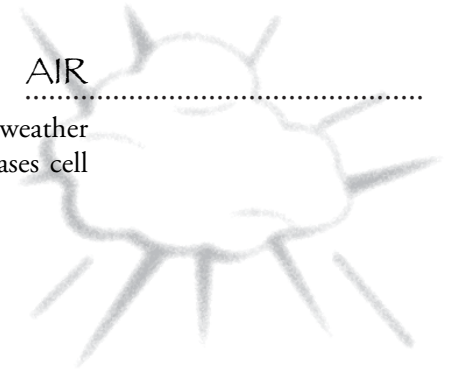
Tropical bonsai love being outside for the summer, any time temperatures are above 60°F. When summer is ending, and the temperatures go below 60°F at night, it is time to bring the tropicals inside. During the dry winter months it is helpful to have the tree on a humidity tray. Make sure it is not near a heat source. Most varieties can also be grown indoors year-round. Place your tropical bonsai on trays as close to the window as possible. You can set up a small fan for air circulation, and frequent misting is recommended.



## AIR

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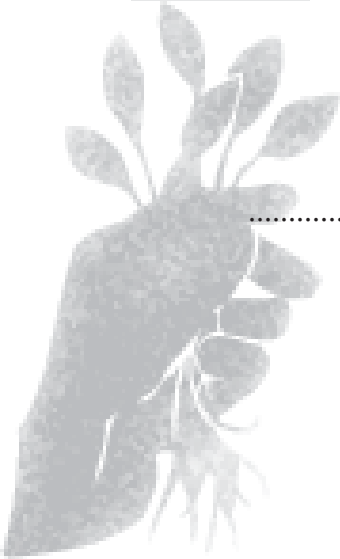
If your tropical bonsai is inside, open the window in the fine weather and set up a fan in the winter. Good air circulation increases cell growth and helps keep the tree healthy.



## CLEANLINESS

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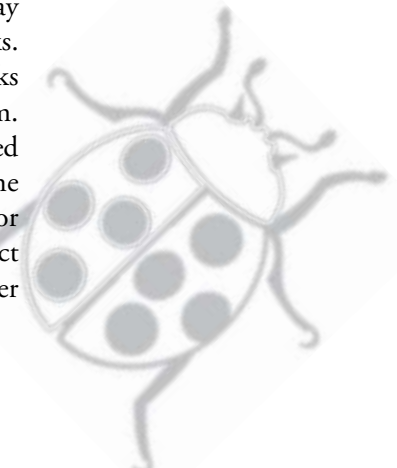
As your bonsai grows, it will naturally shed some leaves. Always remove dead leaves from the tree and from the top soil, and gently shower down the foliage once a week. This will help discourage pests and diseases.

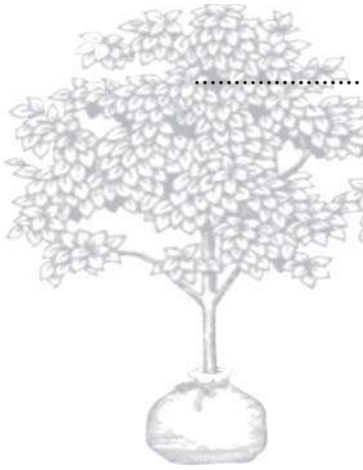


## PESTS AND DISEASES

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Just as children can catch a cold, your bonsai are susceptible to the common houseplant pests and diseases. The best defense is to keep your tree clean and healthy. Always observe the bonsai closely. If you notice any abnormal leaf drop, stickiness to the foliage, or visible insects, you need to treat the problem. Start by showering the tree with lukewarm water to thoroughly wash away any insects. Then spray with a mild insecticidal soap (always follow directions when using any insecticide). One spray is usually not enough. You may need to repeat the treatment once a week for two or three weeks. Insects may be knocked back, but they can reappear in a few weeks or months. Keep a watchful eye and be diligent about treating them. Contrary to popular belief, indoor bonsai are *more* likely to be affected by insects than outdoor bonsai. Keeping your bonsai outside for the summer will strengthen it and make it more resistant to pests. Indoor trees may also get fungus and other diseases. Please learn to detect and treat these problems. You can always consult with us if stronger measures are necessary.





## REPOTTING

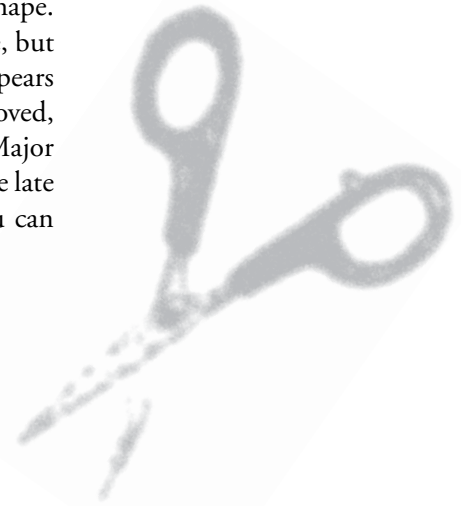
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Frequency of repotting depends on the size and age of the tree, the condition of the roots, and other factors. Older trees, or those in larger pots, may need repotting every two to four years. Younger tropicals, or those in small pots, may need to be repotted every year. The best time to repot tropicals is when they are strong and vigorous—usually late spring through early summer is best. 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

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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 too much, which could 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 late spring to early summer. If you need help with trimming, you can always visit or give us a call.



## DESIGN AND STYLING

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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. Varieties of tropical bonsai are so numerous that you can train them in all bonsai styles. A natural vine, like the bougainvillea, is well suited to a slanting or semi-cascade style. Because many tropicals flower and fruit, they are often planted in glazed or colorful containers.



**New England Bonsai Gardens** is one of the finest, most beautiful bonsai nurseries in America, with a world-class bonsai collection, thousands of bonsai and pre-bonsai, pots, tools, books and accessories. We want you to succeed with bonsai. We offer workshops, private tutorials, and professional

consultations to help you. Visit us at the nursery anytime—we are open year-round, seven days a week, from 9 am to 5 pm. You can also visit us online at **[www.nebonsai.com](http://www.nebonsai.com)**, where you can shop at our online store, access our catalog and newsletter, learn about special events, and more.



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