

SUNLIGHT AND WATERING

SUNLIGHT

We recommend placing your Bonsai in full sun or as much sun as possible year round. Sunlight is what your Bonsai use to produce energy, without it they will weaken and eventually die. The exception here is when a Bonsai has been temporarily weakened from re-potting, or is sick. In these instances, it's advisable to place your Bonsai in dappled sunlight, until such times as the plant recovers and shows signs of new growth.

WATERING

The most important part in taking care of your Bonsai is the watering. How often your Bonsai needs to be watered depends on several factors (such as; species, size, pot dimensions, time of year, soil-mixture and climate), indicating that it's near impossible to say conclusively, how often you should water Bonsai. However, understanding a few basic guidelines will help you to observe when a Bonsai needs to be watered.

HOW OFTEN SHOULD I WATER?

As mentioned above, there are many factors that determine how often a Bonsai should be watered. Instead of following a predetermined watering schedule, you need to learn to observe your Bonsai and water according to their specific requirements. The following guidelines will help you to get Bonsai watering right:

Water your Bonsai when the soil gets slightly dry

This means you should not water your Bonsai when the soil is still wet, but only when it feels slightly dry. Use your fingers to check the soil at around 0.4" (one centimetre) deep. Once you have more experience, you will be able to see (rather than feel) when watering is required.

Never water on a routine

Observe your Bonsai individually. Each is it's own unique organism, with it's own unique requirements. Rather than watering on a daily routine instead, provide water quantities specific to each individual plant, until you know exactly what you are doing.

When?

It doesn't really matter at what time you water a Bonsai. We typically advise to water in the morning, although it is important to reinforce that you should water your Bonsai as soon as the soil gets slightly dry, regardless of the time.

HOW TO WATER BONSAI TREES?

Bonsai should only be watered when the soil becomes dry. When watering Bonsai you need to be sure that the soil is thoroughly soaked so that the entire root system is wetted. To do so, keep watering until water runs out of the pots drainage holes, and possibly repeat the process a few minutes later. Water from above using a watering can with a fine nozzle; this will prevent the soil from being washed away. We recommend using rainwater if possible, (as it does not contain added chemicals) however if rainwater is not readily available, there is no problem in using regular tap water.

Note: During the warmer months of the year, you need to be mindful of hot, windy days. Hot winds quickly sap your Bonsai of moisture, leading to severe damage or even death, if not watered quickly.

PROTECTION AND FERTILISING

PROTECTION FROM PESTS AND DISEASE

Under or over watering or fertilising, inappropriate growing conditions (including airless, compact soil) and poor positioning of your Bonsai, can all cause stress, leaving your Bonsai more susceptible to infection from disease and bugs. Bugs attack Bonsai sporadically however; you will quickly learn which pests are likely to turn into an infestation at a moment's notice! If there are attacks from bugs and diseases, healthy and mature Bonsai are better equipped to survive. Bonsai in poor health, or stressful growing conditions, are increasingly vulnerable to any external attack on their weakened defences, just as an unhealthy person with a low immune system is more at risk of getting sick.

Precautions, such as regular spraying with systemic insecticides and fungicides can be useful, though should not be solely relied upon. Systemic remedies work by being sprayed onto the foliage, which digests the treatment into the sap stream of the plant. From here, it is distributed throughout the entire plant. Attacks from bugs are quelled when they attack the plant and are exposed to the treated sap. A good example of a systemic insecticide is Confidor, which can be purchased from garden centres and hardware retailers such as Bunnings. It's important however, to keep in mind that systemic treatments are not 100% effective. Regular spraying is expensive and environmentally unsound, while repeated use can also reduce the effectiveness of treatments when they are actually needed.

When spraying your Bonsai we would advise performing this task either early in the morning or later in the afternoon. Systemic insecticides increase your Bonsai susceptibility to harmful leaf burn from the sun's rays. During the winter months, we recommend spraying your Bonsai with a very diluted mixture of lime sulphur. The plant should be sprayed at least twice during winter, about 1 month apart. Use a dilution of 2.5-5 mL per litre using a fine misting spray. This technique is a good preventative measure, used to deter bugs from laying their eggs on your Bonsai. Eggs typically hatch early in spring.

Note: Make sure you wear a mask and protective clothing when using pesticide chemicals.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Firstly, try to identify what has happened to your Bonsai. Has it lost foliage? Do any of the leaves have discolouration or holes? Closely examine the foliage, is there any evidence of pests either on the Bonsai itself? Examine the surface of the soil and around the surface on which the pot itself is standing. Once the pest or disease has been identified and dealt with, it is important to identify if there is any way that you could prevent re-occurrence in the future. Some pests, such as caterpillars and aphids are difficult to guard against, although you should be able to anticipate which Bonsai in your collection are more likely to be attacked.

FERTILISING

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Regularly fertilising your Bonsai during the growth season (early Spring through until mid-Autumn) is crucial in order for your Bonsai to thrive. Normal trees are able to extend their root system looking for nutrients; Bonsai however are planted in rather small pots and need to be fertilised in order to replenish the soil's nutritional content.

BASIC PARTS OF FERTILIZER

The three basic elements of any fertiliser are Nitrogen (N), Phosphorous (P) and Potassium (K), with each element serving different purposes. Nitrogen increases growth of leaves and stems, Phosphorus encourages healthy root growth and Potassium encourages growth of fruits and flowers. Different ratios of NPK are being used for different Bonsai at different times of year, which is very important to take into account when fertilising Bonsai.

WHEN SHOULD I APPLY FERTILIZER?

You should fertilise during the entire growth season, which spans from early Spring through until mid-Autumn. If your Bonsai is showing signs of ill health, or has recently been re-potted, it's advisable to wait until that the Bonsai shows signs of new healthy growth before resuming a fertilising regime.

WHICH FERTILIZER TO CHOOSE?

It's very important to choose the right fertiliser for your Bonsai. We recommend the use of an all-round organic fertiliser such as Powerfeed or Nitrosol. These particular products are readily available from garden centres and hardware retailers such as Bunnings.

HOW TO FERTILIZE BONSAI TREES?

Feed your Bonsai using the quantities and frequency as stated on the fertiliser's packaging. You can choose to reduce the recommended quantity by half for Bonsai that no longer require strong, vigorous growth and when you want to encourage fine and compact branches, short internodes and reduced foliage size.