

## Deciduous Bonsai

Deciduous trees shed their leaves in the autumn and regrow them in the spring. They captivate us with their tender new growth in the springtime and their vivid, fiery hues in the autumn. These trees are resilient to cold temperatures and are not suitable for indoor cultivation. Deciduous trees with small leaves and intricate branching are ideal for bonsai cultivation. Examples of such trees include Japanese Maple, Hornbeam, Trident Maple, Dwarf Crabapple, Wisteria, Japanese Beech, Zelkova, certain Elm species, and numerous others.



### Water

There is no universal watering schedule that suits all bonsai trees. Bonsai trees can quickly dry out due to their placement in coarse soil and shallow containers. Depending on factors such as tree type, pot size, soil type, climate, and more, the frequency of watering can vary. To determine if a bonsai needs watering, check the soil moisture by inserting your finger about half an inch into the soil. If the top half inch feels dry, it is time to water.

When watering, ensure thorough soaking by either allowing the bonsai to absorb water from the drainage holes in the sink or showering it from above until water drains through. Avoid letting the soil completely dry out or become waterlogged. Base your watering frequency on the soil's moisture content. To gauge this, check the bonsai's soil at various intervals after watering to understand how it dries out.

Regularly monitor the bonsai's soil moisture by checking it daily. If the soil feels moist, hold off on watering. However, factors like a small pot size, hot or windy weather, or root-bound conditions may necessitate more frequent watering. When in doubt, err on the side of caution. Check multiple areas of the soil for dryness, and ensure the bonsai never becomes excessively dry.



### Light

The majority of deciduous trees thrive when exposed to half a day of full sunlight or dappled shade. Some can tolerate full sunlight throughout the day. Ensure your deciduous bonsai receives some sunlight as they prefer not to be in full shade. During the bonsai's dormant period and when placed in its winter spot, minimal light is required.



Maintain consistent air circulation around your deciduous bonsai at all times. Even during the winter period, having some airflow is beneficial. Improved air circulation promotes cell growth, strengthens the tree, and decreases the chances of disease.



When your bonsai begins to produce fresh, pale green growth, it is time to initiate fertilization. Use a gentle organic fertilizer in pellet or liquid form, typically with an equal balance of nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium (NPK) during the growing season, and reduce the nitrogen content in the autumn. Apply the pellets once a month and the liquid fertilizer about every two weeks. As the tree's growth slows down in the middle to late summer, you can reduce the liquid fertilizer frequency to once a month.

During the bonsai's winter dormancy period, refrain from applying fertilizer. It is important to note that you should never fertilize a weak tree.



Deciduous trees are not suitable for indoor growth. It is best to acquire them in the spring when they can be safely placed outside. Most deciduous trees can be exposed to at least half a day of sunlight when temperatures are 35°F and above. They can remain outdoors until temperatures consistently reach freezing levels, typically around the third week of November in regions like New England. During this period, the tree should be kept cold but protected, such as in an unheated attached garage, a three-season porch, or any sheltered area where temperatures do not drop below 20°F consistently. It is essential to provide water regularly.

Some individuals opt to bury their hardy trees in the ground in a well-protected location, although this approach carries more risks due to limited control over conditions. An ideal winter storage spot for deciduous bonsai is a bright, well-ventilated area with temperatures between 32° and 45°F. Keep in mind that

different varieties of deciduous bonsai exhibit varying levels of winter hardiness, and the tree's overall health and root system strength also play a role.

In the spring, when outdoor temperatures are slightly above freezing, you can return your deciduous trees outside. If there is a sudden drop in temperature below freezing, bring them indoors until temperatures rise above freezing again, especially if the buds have already transformed into leaves. Once you observe new buds beginning to swell, move the tree to a well-lit area that is not excessively warm. In regions with milder climates where temperatures never dip below 30°F, deciduous bonsai can be left outdoors throughout the year.



### **Cleanliness**

As your bonsai develops, it will naturally shed some leaves. Regularly remove any dead leaves from the tree and the topsoil, and delicately shower the foliage once a week. This practice will aid in deterring pests and diseases.



### **Pests & Diseases**

Most deciduous bonsai trees exhibit good resistance to pests. Occasionally, you may notice aphids, which are sap-sucking insects leaving a sticky residue, on the fresh new growth in spring. Simply rinse them off with water and then apply a gentle insecticidal soap. Some deciduous trees may be susceptible to leaf fungus, particularly in damp climates with inadequate air circulation. Symptoms may include a white powdery appearance or the presence of blue, black, or red spots on the leaves. Prune severely affected leaves—those that are more than half damaged—and treat with a mild fungicide like liquid copper, following the instructions on the product label.

Ensure the bonsai receives adequate air circulation and refrain from misting if it has a fungal infection. Familiarize yourself with identifying pests and diseases and administer appropriate treatment. If you suspect any issues with your bonsai, please contact us promptly for assistance.



## Repotting

The ideal time for transplanting deciduous bonsai is when the new buds are starting to swell, just before they unfurl into leaves. This window typically occurs from February onwards, and the process can occur rapidly, so it is essential to monitor your tree closely. Once the buds have transformed into leaves, it is too late to trim the roots. The frequency of repotting varies depending on factors such as the tree's size and age, root condition, and other considerations. Younger trees may require repotting annually, while older trees or those in larger containers may need to be repotted every two to four years.

Repotting is a crucial task that often involves root pruning and should be executed correctly. Assistance can be provided for this process. Additionally, you can participate in a workshop, seek guidance from a reputable bonsai enthusiast or club, or refer to informative bonsai resources to enhance your knowledge and skills in bonsai care.



## Pruning & Shaping

Deciduous bonsai trees need regular pruning and sometimes bud-pinching throughout the growing season to maintain the branching structure. Different varieties may require slightly different techniques. The frequency of pruning depends on the growth rate of your tree, similar to how you trim your hair when it starts to look untidy. It is crucial not to over-prune and weaken the tree but to trim enough to maintain its shape. Sucker growth at the base of the trunk and in the tree's, bends can be removed unless you intend to develop a branch or trunk in that area. Major pruning is typically conducted when the bonsai is at its strongest, from early spring to early summer. If you need assistance with pruning, feel free to visit us or give us a call.



## Desing & Styling

The most exceptional and aesthetically pleasing bonsai trees are those that appear natural. By studying mature trees in their native habitats, you can sense their unique character and resilience. This natural look is the pinnacle of bonsai artistry that we aim to achieve.

Conifers lend themselves well to a variety of bonsai styles, ranging from formal upright to full cascade. Japanese White Pines, for instance, excel as informal upright bonsai, while certain cedar and cypress varieties are more suitable for formal upright styles. By observing how these trees grow in their natural surroundings, you can appreciate them in their most authentic and exquisite form.

Traditionally, conifers are planted in unglazed containers. The earthy tones of these pots complement the browns and reds of the bark, as well as the rich, deep green of the foliage, enhancing the overall visual appeal of the bonsai tree.