

CONIFER BONSAI

CARE SHEET

Many conifers make excellent bonsai. These include: Spruce, Pine, Juniper, Cedar, Cypress, Hemlock, Larch, Cryptomeria and others. Most conifers are very hardy and should be grown outside in all but the coldest weather. Please take the time to read this care sheet. If you follow these simple guidelines and add a little common sense you can enjoy your bonsai for many years to come.

WATERING

Proper watering is critical. The basic rule is: allow the soil to dry down between watering, but never allow it to become bone dry.

Under-watering and over-watering are both problems. Under-watering is not watering often enough or well enough. Over-watering is watering too often. Under-watering is most likely to occur in the summer while over-watering occurs most often in the winter.

Feel the surface of the soil regularly. If the soil is dry (or you think that it will become dry before you have a chance to check it again) then it is time to water. Water from above until the soil is well soaked.

During hot dry weather your tree will need frequent watering. Direct sunlight and wind can cause the soil to dry out rapidly. Very small bonsai in small pots can sometimes dry out in hours. Be alert to changing conditions.

Remember: Allow the soil to dry down between waterings, but never allow it to become bone dry. For an in depth discussion of watering, see our handout "The Art of Watering."

LIGHT

As a rule you cannot overexpose your conifer bonsai to light. You can however, harm it by not giving it enough light. Though most conifers thrive in direct sunlight, a few, like the Hinoki Cypress adapt well to light shade.

LOCATION

Conifers should be grown outside in all but the coldest weather. Almost all conifers can tolerate very cold temperatures, but need to be protected from frigid winds. When night temperatures are consistently close to freezing it is time to move your conifer into a garage, basement, cold frame or other cold protected spot. When it is below freezing at night you don't need to worry about light.

Check for drying out. Though bonsai use less water in the winter, drying out can still be dangerous. In the late winter when night temperatures are at about freezing it is time to move our conifer back outside (if new buds are already opening, you'll need to protect it from freezing). To avoid sun burn, it is best to gradually move your tree from shade to full sun. For a more in depth discussion of over wintering please see our handout "Cold Climate Wintercare for Outdoor Bonsai."

FERTILIZING

Feed your bonsai frequently during the growing season (spring, summer and fall). We use Green King pellets. Scatter them on the surface or gently push them into the soil. Apply about one pellet per square inch of soil surface. Pellets last about one month. For optimal results, supplement with a fish based fertilizer about every two weeks.

PEST PREVENTION

Clean your bonsai one or twice a month by removing unhealthy foliage. Wash each time you water by running the water through the foliage. Misting is useful when the air is dry, as it provides extra moisture and helps keep the foliage clean.

Spider mites are a threat to conifers. Hold a white piece of paper under your tree and gently shake the foliage. If there are mites, some will fall onto the paper. If you look very closely, you can see them slowly crawling around. If your tree has mites, treat with an insecticidal soap. Repeat every four days until they are eliminated. If you have a serious infestation, we recommend consulting a professional.

REPOTTING AND STYLING

Most bonsai need to be repotted every two or three years. Occasional trimming (and perhaps wiring), will also be necessary to keep your bonsai looking good. If you need help, we recommend consulting a good book, a bonsai professional, or a competent enthusiast for advice.

Thank you, enjoy your bonsai and don't forget to water.

If you have any question please call, write or drop by:

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