

Bonsai is a Japanese art form that captures the essence of a natural setting. Various pruning and training techniques help attain this look. Please refer to the back of this pamphlet for instructions. The following list gives some suggestions and details of plants that work well as outdoor bonsai specimens.

### Bonsai for part shade

***Acer palmatum* varieties- Japanese Maple.** There are so many varieties with different growth habits and characteristics. Many varieties can tolerate full shade. Please ask for a handout at the information desk. Repot every 1-3 years in spring. Prune in spring. Keep soil moist. Monitor for aphids.

***Adina rubella*- Chinese Button Bush.** Clusters of white flowers in summer and beautiful fall color. Repot every 2-5 years. Prune after flowering, or in spring. *Adina* can dry out a bit between waterings.

***Chamecyparis obtusa*- Hinoki Cypress.** These conifers tolerate part shade or full sun. They need to be repotted every 2-3 years in mid spring. Prune in summer. Zone 4.

***Daphne sp.*-** Fragrant flowers on this mounding evergreen shrub. Repot every 2-3 years. Prune in spring. Keep moist. Some species tolerate full sun. Shelter from severe winter winds.

***Rhododendron sp.*-** Dwarf varieties tend to have small leaves and flowers. Some species can tolerate more sun. After flowering, repot every 2 years when young,

and every 4-5 years when older. Prune immediately after flowering. Keep moist.

***Stewartia pseudocamellia*-** This slow growing tree has white summer flowers and brilliant fall color. Repot every 2-5 years in early spring. Prune in early spring before repotting. Keep moist. Zones 4-7.

***Tsuga canadensis*, or *T. mertensiana*- Hemlock.** A graceful conifer with flattened needles. Repot every 2-4 years. Prune in summer. Keep moist. Very cold hardy.

### Bonsai for Sun

**Bamboo-** Dwarf species such as *Arundanaria* and *Pleiblastus* are excellent bonsai plants. Repot every 2-3 years in spring. Remove undesired new shoots when will soft. Prune out other shoots spring-summer. Keep moist especially in hot weather. Monitor for waterlogged soil and spider mites.

***Chaenomles japonica*- Flowering quince.** Early spring flowers in various colors. Look for the contorted variety for extra interest. Repot every 1-2 years in spring. Prune immediately after flowering. Cut back new shoots mid-late summer. Keep wet they are very thirsty! Zones 4-8.

***Cotoneaster horizontalis*-** Distinct stiff fan like structure gives many possibilities for bonsai. Repot every 1-2 years in mid spring. Prune in spring 3 weeks after repotting and seal wounds. Water when soil is fairly dry. Shelter from winter rains because of rot. Zones 4-7.

***Cryptomeria japonica* varieties- Japanese Cedar.** This conifer has tight foliage and stiff branches. Repot new trees every 2 years in spring. Prune in late summer. Water thoroughly, but do not keep it permanently saturated. Protect from winter winds and extended frosts. Zones 5-9.

***Ginkgo biloba*-** An ancient tree with fan shaped leaves. They can also tolerate part shade. Repot every year in late winter or early spring. Prune in late spring. Regular water. Shelter ginkgos during severe winter freezing. Zones 3-8.

***Ilex crenata*- Japanese Holly.** Small glossy evergreen leaves on this rounded shrub. Repot every 2-3 years in late winter. Prune in late spring. Water thoroughly in summer. Zones 5-7.

***Juniperus chinensis*- Chinese Juniper.** Horizontal conifers with grey green foliage. Repot every 2-5 years in mid spring. Prune in late summer. Keep moist in summer and slightly dry in winter. Monitor for spider mites. Zones 3-9.

***Pinus thunbergi*- Japanese Black Pine.** Upright rich green needles and black fissured bark. Repot every 2-5 years in late spring. Prune in late summer. Keep soil moist, but not saturated. Monitor for root rot.

***Ulmus parvifolia*- Chinese Elm.** Tiny leaves and horizontal structure provide the perfect elements for bonsai. Repot in spring every 1-3 years. Keep moist in summer. Do not use synthetic pesticides because they will defoliate the plant. Zones 4-9.

## After care

### Watering

Begin watering every day, and cut back if the soil is still damp. Bonsai are very water demanding because they cannot send out a large root system. Even keep drought tolerant plants moist. Details for watering are in the plant descriptions.

### Fertilizing

In general bonsai need an all purpose granular fertilizer at half strength. Use ½ tsp for every 25 cm of pot spread. Apply in spring, summer and fall. Flowering plants require a fertilizer with higher potassium. A rose food is sufficient. Use for the spring and summer applications, with an all-purpose application in the fall.

### Repotting

Repot bonsai if water drains slowly, or plant growth is greatly retarded. Another sign is if the root mass is very dense and formed to the pot. Bonsai are repotted every one to three years when they are new. Repot older specimens less often. Please refer to plant descriptions for repotting times. Follow directions for starting a bonsai for specific repotting instruction.

### References

[Bonsai a Care Manual](#) by Colin Lewis

[Creating Bonsai](#) by Joe Davis

## Starting a Bonsai

The five basic styles of bonsai include formal upright, slanting, semi-cascade, and informal upright. Additional themes are illustrated in bonsai references.

Beginning a new bonsai is best done in early spring before the plant breaks dormancy. It can also be done in fall, but the plant must be sheltered for the winter.

**1. Materials for beginning.** Pot, bonsai soil mix, wire, root rake, branch pruners, scissors, wire cutters, pliers, and chopstick.

**2. Prepare the pot.** Cover the drain holes with mesh and secure with wire. Add another long loop of wire up through the drain holes for anchoring the root ball.

**3. Root pruning.** Ease the tree from its pot without pulling too hard on the trunk. Gently tease apart the roots at the edges with a root rake or metal hook. Then untangle the roots on the underside. Mist the roots mass occasionally to keep moist and clear away excess soil. Cut back the thick roots at the edges by 1/3–1/2. If there is a large mass of fine roots, remove up to 1/3. Try to leave as many of the fine feeder root as possible. There should be ½-3/4” space around the edges of the pot to allow for growth.

**4. Planting.** Place a layer of soil in the pot with a slight mound under the trunk. Place the plant in the pot. Once the plant is in the correct position, secure with the wires from the drain holes. These wires can be cut off in 2-3 months. Fill the remaining space with soil. Soak the plant and place in a sheltered area.

Compiled by Laura Altwater

## Outdoor bonsai

### Ideas and instruction for Outdoor Bonsai



# Outdoor Bonsai

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