



Harmony and nature for your home



Bonsai *made easy*



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Bonsai is the art of growing miniature trees and shrubs

Practiced for many centuries, bonsai have been cultivated by the Japanese as a way to bring harmony and nature into the home.

Though bonsai trees are a little more delicate compared to the average indoor plant, there are a few basic rules which will enable anyone to care for their tree.

The most important of these are watering, feeding and choosing the right position.



Indoor or Outdoor?

The word bonsai literally means 'tree in a pot'. Some can be grown indoors all year round, whilst others must be kept outside. Here's our quick guide to help you select:

Tropical and sub-tropical bonsai

These trees benefit from being kept warm throughout the year, with a minimum temperature of 10°C. The most common variety to look out for is the *Banyan Fig* (*Ficus retusa*).

During a hot summer, these trees will benefit from being placed outside. As night time air temperatures cool, bring back indoors, check for bugs and locate near a window with plenty of natural light. Don't allow your tree to get trapped behind a curtain during winter nights as the cold will cause damage.

Half-Hardy Sub-tropical and temperate bonsai

These varieties can be grown outdoors during the warmer months and will require frost protection during winter. As night time air temperatures cool, bring back indoors, check for bugs and locate in a cool, light position.

Varieties to look out for:

- **Chinese Elm** (*Ulmus parvifolia*)
- **Japanese Holly** (*Ilex crenata*)
- **Buddhist Pine** (*Podocarpus macrophyllus*)
- **Chinese Myrtle** (*Syzygium buxifolium*)



Hardy outdoor bonsai

These varieties should be kept outside all-year-round but can be moved into a porch or cold greenhouse during the worst winter conditions. Being outdoor plants, they can only be displayed indoors for short periods of time.

Varieties to look out for:

- **Maple** (Acer)
- **Dawn Redwood** (Metasequoia)
- **Chinese Witch Hazel** (Loropetalum)
- **Japanese White Pine** (Pinus parviflora)

Watering

Bonsai need regular watering, preferably with rain water. Check your tree daily and water when the compost is becoming dry.

The most effective technique is to immerse your bonsai in a tray of tepid water up to the rim of the pot. Let it sit for around 20 minutes, allowing the water to be drawn up through the drainage holes. Once complete, remove the pot from the water and allow to drain before displaying again.

When using this technique, allow the soil to become a little drier before immersing again to establish a regular wet-dry cycle. Bonsai will under-perform if the soil is kept too wet so this method is a good way to manage their needs.

Humidity

The atmosphere in our homes can often be too dry for some bonsai. Locating your tree away from heat sources and applying regular misting can usually overcome this.

Another option is to stand your pot in a humidity tray, which is filled with fine gravel and kept moist. As the water evaporates, it helps create a humid micro-climate around your tree.

Feeding

The time to feed your tree is when it's actively growing, usually from April to October. During this time, apply a feed formulated for bonsai every 7 to 10 days.

If you have recently re-potted your tree, wait for 4 to 5 weeks before feeding again.



Bonsai Quick Guide

- Use rain water and a bonsai fertiliser for best results
- Light shaping can be performed at any time of year
- Perform major pruning and wiring from late autumn to late winter
- Re-pot every 2 – 3 years and refresh with a bonsai compost



Shaping & Training

Leaf pruning

Using sharp bonsai scissors, prune new growth regularly to cultivate the desired shape. Allow shoots to develop 4-6 new leaves and then cut back to 2 leaves.

For conifers, check to see if it produces only one or two flushes of growth during the growing season.

Pine species with two flushes, such as the Japanese Black Pine and Japanese Red Pine can have new growth removed in early summer by twisting it away between the thumb and forefinger. They will then produce a second flush with smaller needles.

Pine species with only one flush of growth, such as the Japanese White Pine and Scots Pine, must not have their new growth removed as that would harm them. However, the new growth, a.k.a 'candle' can be shortened.

Wiring

The classic shapes of bonsai are achieved through wiring the tree's branches. Whilst young branches are still flexible, wrap them with an appropriate gauged wire and bend into your desired shape. As the branch grows and thickens, it will be able to support this new shape on its own. When this happens, trim the wire away, before it has a chance to cut into the bark.





Repotting

Bonsai will need repotting every 2 to 3 years, depending on the variety. This is to help keep the tree healthy by managing its root system. Spring is the best time to do this as the tree will quickly recover.

The first step is to inspect the root system by carefully lifting the tree out of the pot. If the roots are still contained within the soil then no action is required. If the roots are circling around in the pot then it's time to take action. Think about moving up to the next size pot.

The next task is to carefully loosen the soil from the edge of the root ball, using a root hook or old cutlery fork. Comb out the roots whilst you do this and then trim them back by 20-25%, using clean, sharp scissors.

Cover the drainage holes in the pot with new mesh and thread a long length of wire through the mesh to hold the root ball in place. Add a layer of fresh bonsai compost to the pot, return the tree and secure it with the wire. This will help stop the tree from falling over if it's knocked.

Top up with fresh bonsai compost as needed, water well and allow the tree to rest for a month before applying a feed.

Did you know?

With regular maintenance, Bonsai can live over a hundred years!

For more gardening and plant advice visit our website www.haskins.co.uk

