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BASIC BONSAI SURVIVAL GUIDE

For bonsai in zones 4 and 5

Indoor Tropical Bonsai These trees are those that are not hardy in our climate and must be protected from frost and freezing by being grown indoors in cold weather. During frost-free months (June-August) these bonsai should be grown outside on a table or stand. Most take full sun. Ask the merchant for the proper light conditions for your plant.

1. These may be kept indoors year round IF provided with humidity, plenty of light and regular watering and fertilizer. They will benefit greatly from being placed outdoors in frost-free weather.
2. Water the regularly (no softened water). Outside you may use a watering can with a fine rose or a garden hose equipped with a fine nozzle. Indoors, in your sink, water gently from the top daily. DO NOT soak established bonsai for watering. If you leave bonsai in a tray with water you will develop root rot. (Note: if the bonsai soil is too compacted or has glued on stones, the trees will not grow since the soil will not take in water...return the tree to the merchant.)
3. Fertilize with an organic pellets such as Bio Gold during the growing season. In the spring, treat the soil with a dose of micronutrients and a dose of chelated iron. Repeat the iron one month later. Spring for these trees starts in January if they have enough light.
4. When indoors, give the bonsai as much light as possible [southern, western or eastern window, northern is not enough light or artificial light (12-14 hours under plant lights)]. Turn the tree often for best growth. Each species of bonsai has its own light requirements...ask about this when purchasing the bonsai.
5. Pinch or cut new growth back to one new set of leaves as it grows to maintain the shape and promote good branching.
6. Wash the plant in Ivory Liquid solution or Safer Soap every 10 days to prevent insect problems. Remember to rinse the plant later with clear water. When the bonsai is outside, insect problems are greatly reduced.
7. Repot tropical trees in mid summer during their dormant period or in early winter before new growth starts. This is at the end of December or early January. Repotting involves changing the soil and trimming the roots so that new fine roots may grow. When you repot, add iron, micronutrients, mycorrhiza and Bio Gold to the bottom layer of soil. Be sure to put mesh over the pot holes and wire the bonsai into the pot. After repotting, you will soak the bonsai in a solution of water and transplanting solution.

Semi- Tropical Bonsai These are trees that benefit from remaining outside from the last frost date in Spring around May 30th and remain there until late fall after light frosts when they lose there leaves (elms, trident maples) or set flower buds (azalea). Once they are

brought indoors treat the same as tropicals. Those that have dropped their leaves will bud out after December 21st. They should be repotted in December.

Outdoor Bonsai These are trees that are hardy in our climate and could be grown in the ground year-round.

1. These must be kept outside year-round. In the spring, summer and fall they are kept on stands or tables in the sun or semi-shade. In winter they are stored as described below.
2. Protect them in an unheated garage or cold frame in the winter. They may also be planted in the ground for winter where they will be protected from the winds and rodent damage. Mothballs around the tree help protect them from rodent damage. Protect from deer. Very hardy species like larch can be stored under trees in your yard in winter...protect from strong winds and heavy snow dropping on them.
3. Water daily or more often in hot, windy weather with a gentle rose on your hose or watering can.
4. Fertilize with an organic pellets such as Bio Gold during the growing season. In the spring, treat the soil with a dose of micronutrients and a dose of chelated iron. Repeat the iron one month later.
5. Turn the tree often for best growth. Each species of bonsai has its own light requirements...ask about this when purchasing the bonsai.
6. Pinch or cut new growth back to one new set of leaves as it grows to maintain the shape and promote good branching.
7. Wash the plant in Ivory Liquid solution or Safer Soap to prevent insect problems. Remember to rinse the plant later with clear water. When the bonsai is being stored for winter rinse it with both Safer Insecticide Soap and Fungicide Soap. Clean away all dead leaves before storing. Check the bonsai during the winter to make sure it does not dry out. If the soil is frozen, it does not need water.
8. Repot before spring growth and root trim before repotting in bonsai soil. Repotting involves changing the soil and trimming the roots so that new fine roots may grow. When you repot, add iron, micronutrients and Bio Gold to the bottom layer of soil. Be sure to put mesh over the pot holes and wire the bonsai into the pot. After repotting, you will soak the bonsai in a solution of water and transplanting solution.
8. If problems develop, see an expert immediately; do not wait for it to get better.
9. During the growing seasons, bring in for special occasions to show, then put them outside on their benches immediately after the event.

Nutrients, fertilizers and other materials mentioned in these instructions are available at my studio.

I also offer care of trees, grooming, and repotting at the studio.

Remember to read a good bonsai book or take lessons for detailed information.

Lessons are given at our studio by appointment.

Call Pauline Muth at 518 882 1039 or contact by email at Pauline@pfmbonsai.com

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