

MONTHLY TIPS

Enjoy your bonsai. Admire what you have achieved. But, think about future ramifications. Selectively pinch, nip, and fine wire all of your trees. Water your trees, check for pests, and continue to work on the refinement of your trees.

Continue to fertilize, until late August, with your regular fertilizer. Then, continue to fertilize but use a fertilizer with no nitrogen - such as 0-10-10. Nitrogen (the 0 in previous formula) promotes growth. You do not want new growth at this time of the year because such growth will not have time to harden off before winter.

If the soil in your bonsai container is hard and compacted use a nail to aerate the soil. Don't think about repotting in August. Instead poke six or more holes in the soil to loosen the soil. The aeration will improve the health of the roots and will aid in watering.

WATERING

In August watering can be a problem. In extreme heat (such as we have had this year in early August) trees become somewhat dormant. There is little new growth and water requirements are minimal. If the soil is damp, don't water. Some exceptions are willows and cypress. It is best to overwater such plants. For most needled evergreens you should wait until the soil feels dry - then water thoroughly. Observe your trees and learn their individual watering requirements.

INSECTS

Watch for bugs! Malathion will take care of aphids. Using alcohol on a "Q" tip takes care of soft shell scale on elms. A strong water spray gets rid of red spider mites. Continue to watch for red spider mites - especially fond of junipers and Alberta spruce. Spray with Kelthane as required. (*Ed.'s Note: Using chemical or organic pesticides is not a good idea when trees are under heat stress.*)

IN GENERAL

As the weather gets warmer, some trees will benefit from more shade and protection from the wind. Maples should be protected from shade on hot afternoons. My experience is that almost all non-tropical deciduous trees should be kept out of the full summer's sun. Most bushes and other small tree varieties that, in nature, grow in the shade of another tree should be in a semi-shaded position in summer.

PINCHING

Pinching is done to maintain and improve the shape of your bonsai by removing some of the new soft growth. For deciduous trees, with alternate leaves, new growth should be pinched back so that only from 1 to 3 leaves remain per limb. Leave just one leaf if you want to maintain a limb as short as possible. Leave 2 or 3 leaves if you want the limb to get longer. When pruning deciduous trees (that have alternate leaves) trim at the point you want the new growth to develop.

Deciduous trees should be pinched every few weeks during the growing season. Any new growth from the bottom side of a limb must be eliminated and any new growth that is growing straight up must also be eliminated.

Keep the area close to the trunk open so that you can see the trunk and the structure of your bonsai.

Continue to pinch your junipers and spruces. But, remember that each tree must be allowed to have some new growth each year

Jim Hagan