

Chinese Pepper Bonsai Care from BonsaiOutlet.com

General Information:

Chinese Peppers have glossy semi evergreen leaves most of which stay on the tree all year round. They are vigorous growers so full twiggy branches are quick and easy to grow. A mature looking bark forms quickly so young trees have an aged appearance. Easy to keep, just be sure it's well watered and away from dry heat sources. They look great in the home, office or garden.

Location:

Where to place your Bonsai depends on what species of Bonsai tree you have. The Chinese Pepper likes a well-lighted place, sheltered from direct sunlight works. Ideally, a place similar to a shaded greenhouse works for most types of Bonsai. A lack of sun will leave the foliage weak and create other problems. The Chinese Pepper is hardy, and can tolerate temperatures down to 15° C.

Watering:

The more sunlight and warmth your Bonsai receives, the more often it will need water. More Bonsai die due to improper watering than any other cause. Check your Pepper daily by sticking your finger into the soil. Do not water the tree if the soil is damp or cool. Bonsai generally need to be watered every couple of days, but there is no set schedule. When the topsoil feels dry, water thoroughly and deeply. An old Bonsai watering trick is to place the entire pot in a sink of water an inch or two deep. Let the water absorb from the holes in the bottom of the pot. An inexpensive moisture meter takes the guesswork out of watering.

Misting:

Leaves want humidity to keep them green and healthy. Any time your tree is inside, the air is very dry. Mist often during the day. Avoid putting your Bonsai near a draft or vent, which dries out the foliage. A humidity tray is a great way to increase humidity. These shallow trays filled with small stones have water in the bottom of the tray. Make sure the water does not reach the bottom of the Bonsai pot. As the water evaporates, it creates a moister environment.

Fertilizing:

Fertilizing a Bonsai is essential to its health because nutrients in the soil are washed away with each watering. Fertilizer is like vitamins and minerals for a plant. When new growth appears in the spring, it's time to start feeding your Bonsai. Use an organic liquid fertilizer or a chemical fertilizer diluted to one half strength. Most Bonsai should be fertilized once or twice per month during the growing season and once a month in the winter. Water your tree BEFORE fertilizing. DO NOT FERTILIZE A WEAK OR FRESHLY REPOTTED TREE! This will cause stress to the tree by burning the roots.

Pruning:

To keep a Bonsai miniature, it needs to be trimmed and pruned as new growth appears. Never remove all the new growth at one time. Shape is determined by the overall look that you want to achieve. Sit at eye level with your Bonsai tree and use Bonsai trimming shears. Your cuts should be smooth or slightly concave so the wound will heal quickly. If the cut surface is brown, add pruning paint to the surface. Deciduous trees and be cut throughout the growing season; junipers, cypress and palms can be nipped throughout the year.

Wiring:

Good wiring techniques are used to train Bonsai trees into different shapes and styles. Use the thinnest training wire that will hold the branch in the desired position. DO NOT WIRE A BONSAI JUST AFTER REPOTTING. Wind the training wire in the direction the branch is bent in order to keep the wire from loosening. Wrapping the wire too tightly will cause scarring. Wrap just tight enough to get the job done. Begin at the base of the Bonsai tree and slowly wrap the wire around the trunk to anchor. Continue along the branch you wish to train. Repeat the process as needed. After about 6 weeks, the branch should be able to maintain the shape on it's own, and the wire can be removed. Cut the wire carefully from the branch. DO NOT UNWIND WIRES. This could cause the branch to break.

Repotting:

A Bonsai should be repotted periodically to supply the plant with fresh soil. When the roots can be seen growing out the sides of the Bonsai container...it's time. For most Bonsai this occurs every two years in early spring. Chinese Peppers can easily be grown in moisture retentive soils that are acid, neutral and alkaline. After repotting, water thoroughly. DO NOT FERTILIZE FOR 3-4 WEEKS.

Insects and Diseases:

Insects such as aphids, spider mites, scale, and root aphids are common Bonsai pests. These can be attacked with the use of insecticides and fungicides in the form of sprays, soapy rinses, or systemic poisons. Spraying your Bonsai once every month or two with a non-toxic insect spray is recommended. Soaps should be rinsed of the next day. **DO NOT SPRAY WHEN SOIL IS DRY.**

Indoor Bonsai:

Plant varieties that do well as indoor Bonsai include Ficus, Fukien Tea, Jade, Serissa, Podocarpus, Schefflera and Norfolk Pine. Tropical and subtropical varieties can be left outside when temperatures stay above 45° F. Houseplants should be placed in an east, south, or west window with filtered sunlight. Use grow lights up to 12 hours per day. The use of a humidity tray or frequent misting is recommended to offset the dry indoor air. When placed outdoors, pick a spot that is partially shaded.

Outdoor Bonsai:

Ligustrum, Juniper, Chinese Elm, Cypress, Maples and Pines are all examples of good outdoor plants. These plants require the winter dormant period for good health. At 40° F. or colder your tree does not need sunlight. If temperatures are expected to drop below 25° F., mulch your Bonsai with pine needles or peat moss, and move your tree to a protected, unheated area such as a garage or enclosed porch. As temperatures rise, your tree will begin to grow and require more light. Your Bonsai may become frozen during the winter. **DO NOT WATER A FROZEN TREE!** Every 4-6 weeks there is usually a thaw, you can water your tree at that point.

DISCLAIMER: The content provided in this article is not warranted or guaranteed by Bonsai Outlet. The content provided is intended for entertainment and/or educational purposes in order to introduce to the reader key ideas, concepts, and/or product reviews. We are not liable for any negative consequences that may result from implementing any information covered in our articles or tutorials. Happy bonsai gardening.