

## **Bonsai Trees**

The art of Bonsai started in the Orient centuries ago. First it was developed by the Chinese and later adopted by the Japanese. Today, the bonsai culture is enjoyed world wide. An understanding of the basic plant requirements makes it possible to grow the bonsai of your choice. Some of these are:

**Temperature** – Bonsai are meant to be outdoors. They may be taken inside the home for two to three days at a time but should be rotated back to a well ventilated location outside. If the desire is to have the bonsai inside the home, all the time, then it is recommended that several trees be maintained outside so they can be rotated often.

**Light** – Filtered (shaded) natural light is advised. Avoid direct sunlight if adequate ventilation can not be provided.

**Water** – Keep the soil moist, not wet. An overly watered plant is as unhappy as a dry one. An effective watering method is to soak the tree in a water filled tub (3” to 6” of water) and allow the water to drain after the soil is thoroughly wet. In the summer, daily water applications may be necessary. You can place ice cubes on the soil and let them melt which avoids run off and allows the water to soak in. During the cooler months, watering every third day may be all that is needed. Plants in smaller or shallow pots tend to dry out faster and need more frequent watering. Misting the foliage is also beneficial.

**Feeding** – Feed sparingly. Use plant food at one-fourth the recommended strength at six week intervals. The trees are at rest November through February and fertilizing is not necessary at that time.

**Trimming & Training** – This is necessary to maintain the artistic shape. Cut or pinch the end of the new growth with your fingers to maintain the desired and original shape. Small pruning shears are available for this purpose. It is better to shape often than to let it get too big and cut back severely.

**Repotting** – The best time to repot is generally early spring. Transplant only when the tree outgrows the original container. This can be readily seen as the soil and plant will rise above the edge of the planter. Root prune at this time to get rid of the long nonessential roots.