



Bonsai Care CONIFERS

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Outdoor Bonsai Plants

Conifers, cone-bearing plants with needled or scale-like leaves, have been favorite bonsai subjects for centuries. In common with their full-sized cousins, they evoke an air of majesty and rugged endurance. With very few exceptions, conifers--regardless of whether they are pines, junipers, cedars, or cypresses--are happiest when grown as outdoor bonsai, and given a cold-season dormancy period (see below).

How to Care for Your Plant:

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS: Your conifer bonsai will especially enjoy staying outdoors year round--but even if you keep it indoors in the summer, the plant must be given a cold dormancy from fall to spring. Ideally, the plant should be put in a cold but wind-free enclosure; sink its pot in garden mulch to keep the roots from freezing.

LIGHT: If you keep your bonsai indoors in the summer, place it in a sunny window where it will receive at least few hours of direct sunlight each day. If your plant remains outdoors in the summer, put it in dappled but not direct or daylong sunlight. A somewhat sheltered spot, out of the way of strong breezes, is also best.

WATERING: From spring through early fall, water whenever the potting medium or cover moss is dry to the touch. In warm, dry conditions you *may* have to water once a day (preferably in the morning). Water thoroughly. At least a little water should come out of the pot's bottom drainage holes, but the plant should not stand in saucer water afterward. During winter dormancy, no watering will be necessary unless there is an extended dry spell. You may wish to apply an antidessicant spray to the plant's foliage before the onset of winter.

HUMIDITY: If you keep your plant indoors in the summer, place your bonsai on a humidity tray or on a pebble tray that is partially filled with water. Make sure your bonsai pot always sits above the pebble tray's water line.

FEEDING: In April and May, feed your plant once a month; in September and October, do the same. Do not feed at all in the other months. Use a mild fertilizer--preferably one with micronutrients as well as nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium.