

NOVEMBER CARE

November can be a 'tricky' month in Asheville as the weather can vary wildly. It might be 70 degrees one day and 25 the next. Some years you might be able to leave your trees on the bench for the entire month and other years require trees to be heavily protected. You should watch the forecast diligently to make the best decisions for your bonsai.

Temperature Watch

If the daytime temperature stays above 50F, leave fertilizer on conifers and broad leaf evergreen bonsai. These trees will benefit from feeding. But this is not the time to fertilize heavily on any tree. Once deciduous trees change color, it is OK to remove any existing fertilizer on the plants.

If the nights are cold, and day time temperature is below 45F, trees go into dormancy. Deciduous trees will change color before the leaves fall off. Conifers change their leaf-color as well. Juniper's needle can change from green to yellowish or bronze. The needles of some spruces and pines needle will change from green to yellowish.

If night time temperatures fall below 32 degrees consider taking your trees off the bench and putting them on the ground. The biggest enemy to bonsai is rapid temperature swings. They can tolerate both cold and hot, but do not like rapidly switching from one extreme to the other. While bonsai may not need to be fully bedded in, consider moving them to a more protected area (north side of house) where they may be subject to less rapid temperature swings.

Removal of Foliage

After you have removed old leaves from deciduous trees, they can be wired. Aluminum wire may be appropriate. Copper wire can leave dark stain on the light colored bark, such as Japanese maple, trident maple, beech and hornbeam. Copper wire that is wrapped with paper or insulated can be used on these trees. Once trees have winter hardened, they become more brittle. 'Big moves' may not be well tolerated this time of the year (as opposed to in the spring).

It is time to remove old needles on pine, as long as you don't need them for the show. On strong and full Japanese white pine, 2nd year or older needles can be removed by cutting with scissors. On weak pines, remove brown needles only. Light thinning can also be done after removal of old needles.

Before you pull needles on your black pine this year, make sure that the new growth has hardened. Remove only old needles. On stronger areas, like the top of the tree, some new needles may also be removed. Summer growth can be thinned

out to 2 buds. Cut back can be done at this time also. If you plan to wire your tree, leave more needles on it. When we wire we might break some needles. So an extra few pairs of needle should be left on the tree

Clean Up

After old foliage removal is done, topsoil should be replaced. Scrape top $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 inch of topsoil away from the trunk. Working from the base of the tree to the edge of the pot. Be careful not to create a dish or make it uneven. Small crossing roots should be cut. (Large roots can be cut off when the bonsai is repotted in the spring.) Small roots that grow upward should be cut off. Brush off the old topsoil with small broom or brush. Add new topsoil and tap it down, with small trowel. The soil level should be below the lips of the pot at least $\frac{1}{4}$ inch. Water it well afterward. This process aerates the soil. It helps drainage. Compact topsoil can repel water, or stay too wet.

Any unwanted moss that is growing on the trunk should be removed with a toothbrush. Moss can cause the bark to stay to wet in cooler temperatures.

Dormant Spray

After trees are dormant, spray them with lime-sulfur-dormant spray. Lime-sulfur will kill insect-eggs fungus, and scales. Check the label for direction. (Generally, recommended doze is 1 part lime-sulfur to 20 parts water). Cover the soil and pot with wet newspaper before spraying lime-sulfur. Lime-sulfur can burn the roots of your bonsai. Water the soil after spraying to wash out excess amount of lime-sulfur.

Caution: Do not spray when, bonsai has just been wired or if the temperature is expected to get warm. It can burn the tree and kill some branches. December may be a better time to consider dormant spray, but again, it is temperature dependent and will vary from year to year depending on the climate.

Watering

Keep your eye on watering. Lack of water is as dangerous as too much water. Rain may not reach the soil. After light rain (or even heavy rain) you still need to check how much water your trees get. If the soil is soaking wet for long period of time, raise one side of the pot with a wood block. Water will run off to one side and soil will stay slightly drier. Do not let the bonsai go completely dry. Root needs moisture to stay alive and healthy. Water requirements will decrease significantly in the winter months. Bonsai do not like being dry and frozen. Consider early afternoon watering when the plants are at their warmest as

this will also allow sufficient time for water drainage or you may potentially crack pots if there is significant retained water should temperatures drop below freezing.

Suitable trees to work on this Month

You can lightly work on almost anything this month. Do not be aggressive with 'big moves' if you wire.