### **Placement**

As the heat of summer comes into full effect, most deciduous bonsai will benefit from a bit of midday and afternoon shade. Watch for sun damage and move your trees if necessary and before their leaves are damaged too late. Continue to rotate each bonsai regularly for even growth.

### **Watering**

Summer heat means your bonsai needs to be watered more frequently. Monitor soil conditions closely; as sometimes it will be necessary to water twice daily.

If it rains, remember you still may need to water, especially if you don’t know how much rain you got.

### **Defoliation [[1]](#footnote-1)**

Defoliation is performed in May or June, after the first growth of leaves have hardened off. Defoliating early gives the tree enough time to produce a second growth. Only defoliate established, vigorous trees.

Trident maples - Strong growth on developed trident maples may be defoliated or partially defoliated.

Japanese Maples - You can partially defoliate strong trees. Remove large leaves in the strong areas and leave smaller leaves alone. Another technique for more mature trees is to remove one leaf from every pair. For shohin, after removing one leaf of a pair you can cut the other leaf in half. Cutting the leaf in half will keep the new bud smaller.

Broadleaf Tropical Bonsai (except Ficus and Buttonwood). Defoliate finished trees only. If you defoliate the trees in training, they will not grow correctly.

**Decandling & Balancing**

Japanese Black Pines. Developed and heathy Japanese black pines are decandled in June-July. Decandling may be done all in one day or spread out over several weeks to balance uneven growth. Remove fertilizer from strong pines after they have been decandled.

Red Pines. Because these are not as strong as JBPs, red pines usually are only decandled every other year, around the middle of June, but only if very healthy.

Per Danny Coffey, for both black and red pines, decandling generally should not be done after July 4.  Also, whether or not decandled, assure that the energy of these pines is spread evenly by removing needles from strongly-growing areas to allow sunlight and energy into weaker areas

**Wiring**

Early to mid-summer is the best time for wiring; this is when your tree’s branches are most pliable. Wire after pruning (or defoliation) for fewer obstructions. Check all old wires, and remove any before they damage the bark on your trees.

Weeding, Feeding & Mossing

# Weeds. These will be multiplying in your bonsai in June and should be removed, roots and all if possible, as they appear. Oxalis (Yellow Woodsorrel) and Pearlwort (Sagina procumbens) are two of the worst.

Feeding. After weeding, fertilize your bonsai. Danny Coffey likes Biogold Japanese organic pellets, and Bjorn Bjorholm uses Gro-Power tablets (12-8-8). For a liquid fertilizer, use fish emulsion.

Moss. Any live moss that made your bonsai look so good last year probably did not survive winter and should be replaced with either (i) fresh moss such as silver or “sidewalk” moss (Bryum argenteum) or

(ii) a mixture of screened dried sphagnum moss and screened fresh live moss which will turn into a beautiful uniform layer of live moss later this year.

# **Pruning**

Continue pruning throughout the summer; remove branches and foliage that are overcrowded or clash with the aesthetic you’re trying to achieve. A

simple rule from Danny Coffey is to “cut to the silhouette.”

Satsuki Azaleas

Boon Manakitivipart recommends that after about 3/4 of the flowers on a satsuki azalea have opened, you should remove all of the flowers from the tree. Then, on each terminal in strong areas (lower part and exterior parts of the tree) cut back to 2 shoots and on them cut back to 2 leaves. Also remove shoots growing straight up or down.

June is the best time to wire azaleas.

If the new shoots are very small, it indicates that your satsuki azalea is weak. Do not let it bloom next year as this will help it to regain strength.

### **Repotting**

If you missed the window to repot before your temperate climate tree’s leaves opened, you can carefully repot once the leaves have fully matured. Try to keep the root ball together as much as possible and trim fewer roots than you would in spring. Tropical trees can usually be repotted during summer months.

Fungal and Pest Problems

Phomopsis tip blight is a common fungal problem in junipers. Spores are produced throughout the summer, and infection can occur whenever young foliage is available and moisture or humidity is high. The fungus turns the needles or other foliage brown, and most infections occur in April through June and again in late August through September. A good treatment is to spray with Mancozeb and Cleary 3336.

Black spot fungus can attack any plant with fleshy leaves if the conditions are right. Deciduous Hollies, for example, can easily be infected. It begins to develop in the spring when temperatures reach into the sixties and the garden has been continuously wet for six to nine hours. By the time temperatures reach into the seventies, the disease can be running rampant. Treatments include baking soda, Neem oil and chemical fungicides like Macozeb and Immunox. If you have seen this disease on any of your bonsai in the past, spray those bonsai before the disease takes hold.

Needle Cast is a broad group of diseases that affect the needles of conifers. It is common fungal problem for pines, including Japanese

Black Pine and Ponderosa, as well as spruce trees. It shows up as a discoloration or uneven browning of the needles. Michael Hagedorn suggests spraying with Daconil or a copper fungicide when the new needles are coming out. Also try Cleary 3336 systemic fungicide.

Spider mites are a common insect problem on evergreen bonsai such as junipers, cypress and spruce. To test for their presence, simply shake some foliage over a solid white sheet of paper; if you see tiny specks moving around on the paper it's spider mites. If present, first pressure spray all the foliage several times with the garden hose. If after a day or so, spider mites are still present, you can use Malathion or a less harsh product like Neem oil or insecticidal soap.

1. 1. Thanks to Boon Manakitivipart for his monthly tips which he sent to his students and clients for many years, on which many of these tips are based. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)