March Monthly Bonsai Tips

2023: Although I always look forward to the arrival of March as a signal that Spring is imminent, in looking back to January and February we have to admit that the previous months have been unseasonably mild. From the point of view of a bonsai grower, this can be a problem since our plants are now primed for earlier emergence from dormancy than usual. If early spring continues with mild temperatures, all will be well. Unfortunately, early emergence means that our plants' natural protection from freezing diminishes. As freezing weather (even a blizzard) is not uncommon in March, we should have reason to believe that there will several nights in which the temperatures may well go below freezing, leaving vulnerable plants well...vulnerable.

Most evergreens are able to protect themselves, but deciduous trees and maples especially can be damaged when they start to push out their buds. Be vigilant and prepared as needed. If your deciduous trees are outside, listen to weather forecasts and be ready to bring them into a garage or other protected area in order to avoid damage or loss of the tree. Too many of us have sadly lost trees when we have failed to pay attention to them. Don't let yourself be one of the people who lose a tree due to the poor thing freezing to death.

March is repotting month. Most deciduous trees need repotting every year. Pines can go for several years before needing repotting. Examine your trees. Are there roots growing out of the bottom holes of the pot? Do you see roots circling around the top of the pot? Does the water stay on top of the pot instead of flowing right through? Is the soil hard and compact? Do you see white root tips in your pot? These are some of the signs that your tree needs repotting. If you haven't repotted your early emerging deciduous trees, do so immediately. If you wait until the new growth has begun to harden off, it's too late and you should not perform repotting. In addition, pruning of deciduous trees is usually done when repotting. Be sure to cover pruning wounds with wound paste.

It's not just our trees that are coming out of dormancy. With the warmer weather come the multi-legged pests that like to feast on delicious, tender new leaves and decide to set up housekeeping in our trees. Make a preemptive strike and apply both pesticides and fungicides this month. Malathion, Mancozeb, Bonide 941, or Spray Insecticidal Soap are effective pesticides. Fungicides include Cleary's, Infuse, Daconil, or Subdue Maxx.

As new buds swell, it's also time to begin applying micronutrients such as Root Ruckus or an equivalent micronutrient such as a humic acid liquid organic. Begin to apply fertilizers now. Apply a 0-10-10 fertilizer to deciduous trees and single flush pines in order to keep the internodes short. For double flush conifers apply an organic fertilizer cake such as Gro Power and Dyna Gro . Apply lots of cakes to the trees' surface during March.

Happy Spring. Happy trees. Happy bonsai practice.