

BONSAI TIPS FOR OCTOBER

Fall is in the air and our trees are sensing the changes in their surroundings. Shorter days lead to lessening available light, and our trees will respond by beginning to prepare for dormancy. However, Fall can be a great time for enjoying our bonsai! As deciduous trees begin to prepare for dormancy, many of them will go out with a spectacular blaze of color. Some of the most beautiful pictures of bonsai are maples proudly strutting their stuff! Many bonsai are as colorful right now as they are in the spring, the difference being that the showy leaves take the place of flowers. Here are some October tips for helping our trees to enter into a healthy dormancy.

Location, location, location—October can be a tricky time of year due to unseasonably warm or cold spells, early frosts, etc. Deciduous or tropicals need to be monitored and moved to a sheltered place as necessary. If your deciduous trees begin to re-sprout during a warm spell, move them into a cool, shady place or into a garage.

Watering—Your trees will need less water as their growth cycle slows. As always, the tree's watering cycle should be adjusted according to the needs of the tree.

Wiring—Wires on deciduous trees should be removed if they are cutting in. If they are not removed they will cause the branch to die during the winter. Equally important is checking the wire on pines, because pines often have a late spurt of growth at this time of year. Remove any wire that is cutting in.

Fertilizer/Pesticide/Fungicide—No fungicides needed unless a problem arises. If your tree is bothered by insects, you may apply Malathion, 2 tablespoons per 1 gallon of water.

Trimming/Pruning—Clean off the dead needles on conifers. Clean off dead leaves, etc, from the surface of the soil as rotting material is a breeding ground for disease and a great home for overwintering insects. You may shorten the year's growth on deciduous trees after all the leaves have fallen since the starches have been transported back into the tree for redistribution to next year's buds. Strong upper growth on conifers should also be trimmed.