**Monthly Bonsai Tips - August**

**Watering:**Check constantly to determine your plants’ watering needs — trees and soil can dry out fast this time of year.  Extra sphagnum moss can be placed on top of the soil to hold additional moisture.  This is especially important for satsuki azaleas, maples, flowering and fruiting trees, and any bonsai growing in a shallow pot.

**Pests:** Insects can be very active this time of year — check your trees when you water.  A preventive spray such as Malathion or Bifen is good.

**Summer Work:**Light pruning and pinching may be done in summer.  Heavy pruning is not recommended now because it can allow too much sunlight into the interior of the trees.  Interior growth that is not used to the strong sun will burn.  A newly opened up area can also burn the trunk, especially on maples. It is a good time to wire. Check existing wire to make sure it is not cutting in.

 If you perform moderate pruning and/or branch movement consider protecting the plant from full sun for a couple of weeks.

Decandled Japanese black pines and red pines should be sending new buds at this time.  If you have more than 2 buds,  leave them alone and then thin them back in Fall.  You can thin them out at the same time that you pull old needles.  (if you thin them to 2 buds now, those 2 buds will grow very strong.  The new growth and needles will be long.

It is time to fertilize large Japanese black pines now.  Start with small amounts of organic fertilizer.  Add more fertilizer every 2 weeks till mid-October. Do not fertilize small black pines or shohin yet.  Fertilizing them now can produce summer growth that is too vigorous and needles that are too long. Fertilize shohin black pines in September. If a tree is on the weak side, you can leave a small amount of (fertilizer cakes) on the trees.  If you do not see any buds, it means that the tree is very weak.  You can start to fertilize those trees lightly.

For five needle pines and another high mountain pines – i.e. ponderosa – jack pine – mugo – eastern white pine, after the needle has hardened off, it is time to fertilize them. You can remove brown needles as well as some yellow ones.  Old needles that are still green should be removed (pull or cut) around mid- September.  Carefully, pull needles off if the bark remains around the base of the needle.  If there is scar at the base after you pull them, you should stop and cut those needles with scissors instead.

For spruce and hemlock, after the new needles have hardened off, they can be fertilized and thinned.  Use sharp scissors to cut the stems (not the needles).  There should be small branches or new buds behind the cut.  If there are no new buds or branches behind, it will die back to another section.  Strong mid-day sun can burn foliage.  Keeping these trees protected from full sun during hot periods will help keep the tree healthy.

For Hinoki cypress and eastern white cedar (Thuja sp.).  Fertilize moderately year-round.  If there are long shoots on strong areas of the trees, you can prune them off; otherwise leave them alone.  Remove interior old needles before wiring.  When you wire be careful not to damage the new foliage.

Remember to rotate your trees every couple of weeks to ensure foliage is receiving balanced light on all sides of the tree.