

## BONSAI CARE FOR DECEMBER

This is a continuation of the bonsai care guidance authored by Jim Smith and originally printed in Florida Bonsai Magazine in 1986. It has been updated by Jim and is reprinted with both his permission and that of Florida Bonsai Magazine.

The temperature is getting cooler and the air dryer. The mornings can be chilly to very cold. On Christmas Day we have had one of our coldest days on record. Many fine bonsai were lost because we were not prepared. You should already have made plans to protect your tender plants in the event of a frost or freeze.

Frost usually forms on a clear calm night when the temperature drops into the thirties. It may occur in only one area of your yard so that you should check your plants if you are in doubt. There are several ways to protect your plants from frost.

1. Move them to a place that you know is frost free such as a shade house, porch, car port, or under your benches.
2. Cover your plants with any material that will retain heat such as cloth blankets, cardboard boxes or black plastic, (clear plastic will not work).
3. Wash the frost from the plant just before the sun shines on them.

If a hard freeze is predicted, your plants will need more protection. If the temperature is expected to be below 32 for several hours or more, heat must be provided.

### WATERING

Continue to monitor your bonsai for their watering needs. You will notice that your plants will require much less water during the next few months. If any of your plants do not drain well, be particularly careful that they do not get too much water.

### FERTILIZER

Continue to fertilize to maintain the health of the tree.

### INSECTS AND DISEASES

Continue to inspect your plants for mites, especially Junipers.

Thrips can also be a problem now. These are the insects that cause the leaves of the Ficus Nitida to curl. They can also cause flower buds to drop.

Although scale is usually not a problem, they can cause the leaves to turn yellow and drop. Severe infestation can cause heavy defoliation.

### POTTING

Since much of your potting will be done in the next few months, now is the time to prepare your potting soil. Here are a few recipes you may want to try.

Plant	Mulch	Sand	Turface
Needle leaf	2	1	1
Broadleaf - Tropicals	2-4	1-2	3-6

**Mulch** - Can be peat moss, tree bark, wood chips, etc.

**Sand** - Sharp sand, crushed rock, lava, etc.

**Turface** - Low fired crushed clay.

You may also wish to incorporate a slow release fertilizer and, if ants are a problem, a pesticide.

## **PINCHING**

As long as your plants continue to grow, keep pinching!