

BONSAI CARE FOR NOVEMBER

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 hurricane season is almost over, although one did hit Miami on November 4, 1935 with winds up to 150 MPH. The dry season begins this month with less humidity and no mosquitoes. Temperatures are cooler and there is the possibility of frost.

This is a good time to do the bonsai chores you have been putting off till cooler weather. Make preparations for Winter Protection if you haven't done so yet. This is also a good time to redesign your benches and sprinkling system. Be sure to consider the available sunlight during the four seasons when setting up your benches.

WATERING

Since the days are shorter and temperatures cooler, plants need less water than they do in summer. This is the time to reprogram your Automatic Watering System to compensate for the change.

FERTILIZER

Many plants will still be growing this month. Continue to fertilize in order to maintain the health of the tree. Healthy plants will survive the cold weather better than plants that are starved. Do not over-fertilize, however.

INSECTS AND DISEASES

This area of Florida does not get much relief from insects. They can be just as abundant this month as they are during the warm months. Continue to be on the lookout for them.

Mites can be a problem in dry weather. Check your plants with a 5X magnifying glass for evidence of the pest. Mites are very small, about 1/50 of an inch long and are difficult to see but their spider web can be seen with the naked eye. Control them by spraying with Kelthane three times at five-day intervals. Follow directions on the label.

PINCHING AND WIRING

Continue to pinch all bonsai that are growing.

This is the best time to wire trees that are going dormant. It is much easier to wire a branch that is bare than one that is full of foliage. Since these trees will not be growing until Spring, the wires can be left on for a longer time. It takes longer to train a bonsai by the "Clip and Grow" method than it does by wiring. Learn to wire, you will have better bonsai in less time. Let the soil dry (slightly moist) before wiring. Branches are more flexible when they are not filled with water.

CUTTINGS & LAYERS

Junipers and some hardwood cuttings can be taken now. Information for rooting cuttings can be found in last month's newsletter, or for more detailed information contact your county extension agent.