

## **BONSAI CARE FOR OCTOBER**

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.

October is the month in which we can expect our first chilly weather of the season.

Now is the time to start preparing for the winter protection of your bonsai. If you need quick, temporary protection, consider putting them under your benches and then cover the benches with *Black* (not clear) plastic. Remove the plastic as soon as the temperature rises to a safe level.

### **WATERING**

Although we may get as much rain in October as we did in September, October is usually the end of our rainy season.

When you water your bonsai, you will soon notice that some need less water than others. Our days are getting shorter and our temperature cooler, causing some plants to start their period of dormancy.

### **FERTILIZER**

Many of our plants will be growing vigorously and should be fed if needed. At this time of the year, it is wise to use a fertilizer with less nitrogen, especially for Bougainvillea and other blooming plants. If blooming plants are fed a high nitrogen fertilizer all year, they may put out lush growth and little bloom.

Plants with tender growth are also more susceptible to cold damage.

### **INSECTS AND DISEASES**

Insects and fungus continue to be a problem this month. If worms have not found your Bougainvillea yet, you're lucky. A heavy infestation of worms curl the leaves and then start chewing. To control worms, spray with stomach poison (Sevin) at the first sign of the pest.

It is important to learn to identify each problem and then use the correct pesticide, according to the label. Make use of the vast amount of literature and information available from your County Extension Service.

### **PINCHING AND WIRING**

For the benefit of those who are new in bonsai, Pinching is the removal of the terminal bud on a branch. This causes more buds and branches to grow on the existing branch. Pinching cannot be over emphasized. It must be done regularly during the growing season.

Now is a good time to wire trees that are going dormant. Wire can be left on longer now than in the growing season.

### **CUTTINGS AND LAYERS**

Take cuttings of Junipers now. Dip cuttings in a rooting hormone before sticking in the rooting medium. A good rooting medium can be made by mixing 2 parts peat moss with 1 part perlite.

If you are unable to mist the cuttings, place them in a shaded area. You may

also cover them with clear plastic to conserve moisture.