

How to repot your tree

To prevent a tree from being pot-bound and ultimately starving to death, regular repotting is crucial. Repotting your Bonsai will not keep it small; instead it will supply the tree with new nutrients that it needs to grow and flourish.

How often should I repot?

It depends on the size of container/pot and tree species how often a [Bonsai tree](#) needs to be repotted. Fast growing trees need to be repotted every two years (sometimes even every year), while older, more mature trees need to be repotted every three to five years. Do not repot on a routine, instead check on your trees every early spring by carefully removing the tree from its pot. A Bonsai needs to be repotted when the roots circle around the root system. When the roots are still contained in soil wait another year before checking again.



This tree needs to be repotted as the roots circle around the root mass.

When?

Repotting work normally needs to be done during the early spring; when the tree is still in dormancy. This way the somewhat damaging effect of repotting on a tree is reduced to a minimum, as the tree does not yet have to sustain a full-grown foliage. Repotting in early spring will also ensure that damage done to the root system will be repaired soon, as soon as the tree starts growing.

Bonsai soil mixture

Choosing the right soil mixture is crucial for the health of your trees, it should be draining enough to prevent the roots from rotting, while absorbing enough water to supply the tree with water. Although some tree species need special soil mixtures, the following mixture is suitable for most trees:

Mix Akadama, pumice and lava rock together in a ratio of 2:1:1. When you do not have time to water your trees regularly, choose a more water absorbing mixture (use more Akadama), while you should choose a more draining mixture (use more lava rock) when living in a wet climate. Read the [Bonsai soil](#) article for more detailed information on soil mixtures.

Choosing the right soil mixture is crucial for the health of your trees.



Choice of Bonsai pot

Choosing a pot that fits your Bonsai, both in size as in style, is crucial for the composition. For more information, check the [Bonsai pots](#) article.

Repotting Bonsai, step by step

Click on images to enlarge



1

Make sure you have the right tools to repot your tree; a rootrake, scissors, wire cutter and a chopstick.



2

Often Bonsai are anchored to the pot they are planted in; in that case cut the wire.



3

Remove the tree carefully from its pot, using a cyth



4

We can now evaluate if repotting is necessary; in this case it is, as the roots are circling around the inside of the pot.



5

Using a chopstick we start removing the old soil, starting on the sides and bottom of the tree. Try to avoid damaging roots in the process. When repotting pines, leave at least half the rootmass untouched to protect the mycorrhizal fungus which is essential for the tree's survival.



6

Using scissors, cut away any roots that have grown too long. Do not prune more than 30% of all roots. The root pruning is important for balancing the growth of your Bonsai.



7

In this case we repot the tree into the same pot. We prepare the pot by covering the drainage holes with mesh.



8

The mesh are held in place with a piece of wire.



9

We also attach an additional wire, which we will use to stabilize and anchor the tree to the pot later.



10

Add a thin layer of heavy grain soil first, like lava rock, grit or akadama, which serves as a drainage layer.



11

Next add another thin layer of Bonsai soil.



12

Place the tree in its pot. We use the wires attached earlier to hold the tree in position.



13

Add Bonsai soil around the tree.



14

Use your chopstick to work the soil around the roots, making sure to fill all the air pockets around the root system.



15

Finally, we water the tree thoroughly.



16

This is what the tree looked like two weeks after repotting.