

# Watering Bonsai

Watering your bonsai correctly is a skill. In our dry, breezy, hot Mediterranean climate, daily or even twice daily watering is critically important. Automated sprinklers provide a safety net, but there is no substitute for looking at your bonsai every day to observe its color, growth, and soil moisture.

## How to Water

- ✓ Check the soil moisture with your finger. If the soil is slightly dry 1/2 inch from the surface soil or if you suspect that it will be that dry by the time you can return to the tree, go ahead and water.
- ✓ The watering needs of each bonsai must be determined daily.
- ✓ Be sure to consider wind as well as temperature when determining watering needs.
- ✓ It will not harm a tree to over-water it occasionally.
- ✓ Water your bonsai tree from the top with a fine mist nozzle or rosette
- ✓ Invert the rosette so that the water rains down on the soil to prevent washing away the soil and fertilizer.
- ✓ Water every tree twice, that means: wet the entire surface first, then return to water entirely until the water flows out from the bottom
- ✓ Watering your bonsai daily is not necessary in winter (once or twice per week for dormant trees is fine)
- ✓ Water your bonsai trees with plain tap water. If you have exceptionally hard water, it is helpful to occasionally water them with rainwater to get rid any salt build up in the soil or salt deposits around trunk or pot.
- ✓ Almost all tree species prefer a water pH around 7.4. If you know or suspect that you have very alkaline water, it can be tested by the city. You may

need to find an alternative source for watering your trees if the pH is above 7.5. This is not a problem in Fresno or Clovis. It may be a problem in Hanford.

- ✓ Do not water your bonsai using a hose that has been lying in the sun. Run water through the hose for a few seconds to cool it off.
- ✓ If your bonsai plant has blossoms, avoid spraying the flowers.
- ✓ It is useful to vigorously spray the foliage of scale juniper species such as shimpaku juniper daily. Spider mites thrive in a dry dusty environment, and they are very destructive parasites.
- ✓ The best time of day to water is when the soil is dry and you are there to do it.
- ✓ Deciduous species tend to require and transport much more water than conifers.
- ✓ Black pines however are particularly sensitive to overwatering. They require a higher ratio of air to water in their soil and will slowly become weak and pale if constantly wet.