

Bahama Berry (*Nashia inaguensis*)

*Brought to you by ArtisanWorks, Kagawong, ON
(Most of the included information is obtained from several online sources.)*

General Information: *Nashia inaguensis*, commonly known as Bahama Berry, is a tropical plant with excellent potential as a small bonsai. *Nashia* is native to the island of Inagua in the Bahamas. Dr. Popenoe, a former director of Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden was the first to recognize *Nashia* as a potential bonsai subject. It is a rangy shrub with a mature trunk of 3-4 inches (rare in bonsai). It has a very small shiny green leaf with close internodes. Bahama Berry likes it hot and, if grown indoors, will appreciate warm feet during winter (try a grow light.) The fragrant flowers are tiny and form in cluster and are white. The berries that follow are reddish orange. The leaves are also fragrant - herb-like. These trees can be trained in the shohin (small) and mame (miniature) style. Bahama Berry is a twiggy shrub that grows less than 3 feet in height. Native to the Bahamas, this charming plant has the tiniest aromatic leaves. The bark become interesting with age. The trunk acquires an almost fluted, old looking appearance very quickly. Rootage at ground level is consistently abundant and adds to the aged appearance. It does not develop a trunk very quickly in a small container. For best results grow it for girth development first. The fast-growing angular development is ideal for training in the "clip-and-grow" manner. Wire can be used to add movement to otherwise linear branches. During the growing season development is rampant; sprouts appear on the trunk as well as on branches. To keep an established Bahama Berry bonsai looking good ... prune, prune, prune.

CARE

General Care: Temperature: Bahama berry likes it hot. If grown indoors it will appreciate warm feet during winter (try a heat mat). Protect below 45° F.

Lighting: The Bahama Berry loves full sun. If you keep them inside, find a place that gets a ton of sun. If you want to keep it outside, it can tolerate just about any condition. If the Bahama Berry does not receive the light it needs, the leaves do not increase greatly. The big problem will be etiolation (leggy growth). Once the new growth has stretched, you will lose the denseness which makes the plant so appealing.

Air: Full sun and good air circulation, where it is most happy, can also cause this plant to dry out very quickly; primarily because the roots are so prolific. In the tropics, these roots often fill a bonsai container in less than one growing season.

Watering/Misting: Wants to be consistently moist to wet and never, never dry. Another name is "I Dry-I Die" - unlike many tropicals that can be brought back from the brink of a dead wilt. If you see the beginnings of wilt, drench it immediately. *Nashia* does not like to be soaking wet all the time either! Make sure the soil is fast draining and never be tempted to let it sit in water for any length of time. Leaves want humidity to keep them green and healthy. Any time your tree is inside, the air is very dry. Mist often during the week. Avoid putting your bonsai near a draft or vent which dries out the foliage but do keep circulation flowing. A humidity tray is one way to increase humidity. These shallow trays can be filled with small stones and water. Make sure the water does not reach the bottom of the bonsai pot. As the water evaporates, it creates a moister environment. When watering with tap water indoors in winter, warm it up first (not hot).

Fertilizing: Spring and summer fertilize weekly with a balanced fertilizer, once a month during winter. Use a well-balanced fertilizer, preferably 20-20-20. Try to maintain a pH of 7.0.

Pruning / Training: Clip and grow is the best method, the Bahama Berry can be wired, however use caution - the branches are brittle. Wiring must be watched carefully for signs of wire cutting into the bark. Wire must be removed immediately if this happens. If necessary, the tree can be re-wired after removing the old wire. This tree needs frequent trimming. Branches grow long and fast creating long internodes. Trim often for movement and ramification.

Bahama Berry has a naturally flaky bark that will produce roots even high up in the tree. Using a stiff brush, this flaky part can be removed showing off a smooth yellowish bark that is quite beautiful.

Insects / Pests: In poor air circulation scale and mealy bugs can be a problem. Spray with mild insecticide or soapy water. Pit scale likes to infest the Bahama Berry. You can prevent scale problems by keeping your bonsai in a well-ventilated area. Air circulation also encourages cell growth. Scale insects are tiny creatures with a scaly outer shell. These sap-sucking insects have white or grayish, waxy shells and are most vulnerable to insecticides early in the year before the newly hatched nymphs have developed their waxy protective coating. Scale insects encourage the spread of fungal disease problems which are more likely during the dreary, wet fall and winter days and into the soggy spring days too. Fortunately, unlike mealy bugs and mites, it is doubtful this scale will spread to your other plants. It has very selective taste. Use a mild fungicide and keep the air flowing to chase away fungal problems. You should inspect your tree several times a week to look for problems. Spraying your bonsais once every month or two with a non-toxic insect spray should keep the tree clean and healthy.

Propagation: Cuttings and air-layering are both successful when nights are 70 degrees F. consistently.

Repotting: Repot in early summer . . . not late August. At the proper time of year roots can be severely cut with no problem. Cutting roots too late, too early or during winter is likely to cause its demise. Never mind attempting to comb out...just saw with a knife. Repot when night temperatures are a minimum of low to mid 60's. It seems to grow easily in most soil mixes, but prefers some organic. The Bahama Berry may need frequent repotting because it has a fast-growing root system. Do not wait too late, the plant does not like to be root bound. After repotting, water thoroughly, keep in the shade for one week. DO NOT FERTILIZE FOR 3-4 WEEKS. First time Nashia growers should consider a deeper than usual pot. Once you have experienced the growth rate and its watering needs, you may reconsider your choice of a container.

Design and Styling: The size and proportion of Nashia leaves, flowers and fruit make it ideal for shohin (small bonsai). As a taller plant the trunk often lends itself exquisitely to literati. Because of its stiffness, cascade and windswept are unlikely styles.