

Information on Bonsai

Bonsai trees generally need to be outdoors unless they are tropical trees. They're trees or shrubs, not houseplants. Many of the trees in this display are either native to our area or can survive a winter here outside with some protection from freezing and the wind. Trees in our area require a period of dormancy during the winter to rest from the season of growth and to prepare for the next season of growth. Without dormancy a tree native to our area will die. In addition, trees require sunlight and fresh air during their growing season. It is difficult to reproduce indoors either the level of light the sun provides or the quantity of fresh air that a tree needs to grow.

Some tropical and sub-tropical species which require a warmer climate can do well indoors if provided with enough light. Even these trees can grow outside during the summer in order to maximize their growth in the sun and fresh air.

If you're interested in starting to grow bonsai, realize that this is a hobby which requires daily attention. Approach this decision as if you were deciding about getting a dog. With neglect it is easy to kill a tree. To find a ready-made tree, several routes are possible. **It is NOT a good idea to** buy a ready-made tree at a large chain store. These trees are not kept in ideal conditions and usually die after some time. **DON'T** buy a bonsai over E-Bay. There are a lot of hucksters ready to overcharge for a stick in a pot. Spend a little extra money and find a good tree at a reputable bonsai nursery or garden center. Many nurseries also offer classes and workshops for all levels of bonsai enthusiast.

Bonsai trees need more attention than being simply watered. They require regular attention to maintain their shape. Wiring, pinching new growth, regular fertilizing, and re-potting and root pruning every couple of years are all necessary. This art takes a lot of patience, but if you enjoy bonsai you will develop patience.

THE BEST WAY to get start learning the Art of Bonsai is by joining your local Club:

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| Bonsai Society of Greater Springfield | Phone Sandy S. (413) 531-3358 |
| Web Site www.geocities.com/springfieldbonsai/ | E-Mail Springfieldbonsai@Hotmail.com |
| Club Meeting Location | |
| The B.S.G.S. meeting are held at Springfield Technical Community College in building #17 (the Putnam Building) in room 316 at 7:30 PM on the Third Tuesday of the month see web site for meeting schedule. | |

Another option is to do some reading and style your own bonsai from a tree you've bought at a nursery. Many species are adaptable, among the most adaptable being junipers. Before you do this, be sure it is the right time of year (in our area, mid-April through mid- May) and be sure you've done a lot of reading. Also take into consideration whether you want the plant to be indoors during the winter. It is actually a good idea to have more than one so that you don't kill your only bonsai with over-attention.

A third option is to collect a tree from the wild. Any tree collected in New England is a strictly **outdoors** tree **year-round** except for an occasional day or two indoors for display. Collecting trees must be done properly and with permission. If not collected in the proper way and at the right time of year a tree will die. Do not attempt collecting a tree for bonsai without first consulting with someone who has experience.

Proper winter storage of bonsai is crucial to their survival. Be **sure** to read up on this before winter comes. Don't wait to the last minute!

There are many good books on bonsai. Some good bonsai books to read are:

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| Nick Lenz (local Bonsai Artist), <i>Bonsai from the Wild</i> | Herb Gustafson, <i>The Bonsai Workshop</i> |
| Harry Tomlinson, <i>The Complete Book of Bonsai</i> | Colin Lewis, <i>Bonsai Design</i> |
| John Naka <i>Bonsai Technique I & II</i> | Sunset, <i>Bonsai</i> |



The Internet also has a wealth of information on bonsai. Take a look at these web sites:

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| Bonsai links (many web sites for clubs and individuals): | www.geocities.com/Tokyo/Garden/1666 |
| Bonsai Clubs International (species care articles) | www.bonsai-bci.com |
| World Bonsai Friendship Foundation: | www.bonsai-wbff.org |
| The National Bonsai Foundation | www.bonsai-nbf.org |
| American Bonsai Society (bonsai care articles) | www.absbonsai.org |
| Bonsai at the National Arboretum | www.usna.usda.gov |
| MidAtlantic Bonsai Societies | www.MidAtlanticBonsai.freeservers.com |
| Vietnamese Miniature Landscapes Hon Non Bo | www.members.tripod.com/lit_phan/ |
| Penjing: Chinese Landscape Bonsai | www.venuscomm.com/index.htm |
| Bonsai Talk Web site (great active forums) | www.BonsaiTalk.com |
| Art of Bonsai (great articles & artist interviews) | www.ArtofBonsai.org |
| Internet Bonsai Club: (great forums & FAQ) | www.internetbonsaiclub.org |

Most garden centers will have a variety of species which are good for first-time bonsai enthusiasts. This is a partial list, although not exclusive:

Larix 'laricina' (American Larch)
 Juniperus procumbens 'Nana' (Japanese Garden Juniper or Green Mound Juniper)
 Juniperus chinensis 'Parsoni' (Parson's or Prostrate Juniper) most other juniper varieties are good also
 Ulmus parvifolia (Chinese Elm)
 Picea abies 'Nidiformis' (Bird's Nest Spruce)
 Pinus mugho 'Mugho' (Mountain Pine)
 Pinus sylvestris (Scott's Pine)

For tropical trees, a good starter plant is any variety of Ficus. A couple of good ones are 'Ficus Too Little' or the Willow leafed Ficus, because of their small leaves. Dwarf umbrella plant or dwarf Jade can also be made into nice bonsai

Try these local nurseries for your bonsai needs:

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| Sixteen Acres Garden Center 1359 Wilbraham Rd. Springfield, MA 01119 Phone 783-5883 www.sixteenacresgardencenter.com small selection of bonsai tools & supplies | Bonsai Shoppe 127 West Main Street Plainville, CT 06062 Al Gudat (203) 879-9643 Small retail Bonsai shop with bonsai supplies & tools |
| New England Bonsai Gardens 914 S. Main St. (Rte. 126) Bellingham, MA 02019 (508) 883-2842 www.nebonsai.com | Sanctuary Bonsai 237 Burnham St. East Hartford, CT 06108 Todd Hansen (860) 282-1081 www.SanctuaryBonsai.com |
| Bonsai West 100 Great Road Littleton, Massachusetts tel. 978-486-3556 www.bonsaiwest.com | PFM Bonsai Studio 7 Western Avenue (off Route 147) West Charlton, NY 12010 www.pfmbonsai.com |

Patience is the most important quality one must have to practice the art of bonsai. It can take years to cultivate a well-formed bonsai tree. If you have the patience, or need to learn patience and are ready to do so, this art is for you.