

Summer Maintenance Notes

Watering

Depending on the soil mixture, pot size and temperature, your trees will need extra attention this time of year. Soil will dry out fast and may need to be watered two (or even three) times per day. The plant should be watered until water runs out the drain hole.

Bonsai may be watered either from overhead or by immersing the pot in water up to the rim for about 15 minutes. Soaking works particularly good for plants that are root bound or that have pushed themselves above the pot rim. Home Depot sells mortar mixing trays for about \$5.00. These plastic tubs are 27"x20"x6". In addition to soaking plants, they can be used for mixing soil, collecting trimming debris, or even mixing mortar.

Do not water all of your plants in the identical matter. Different species have different watering requirements. It is just as easy to kill a plant with over-watering as it is to make it die from thirst. One sign of over-watering is the yellowing of leaves.

The axiom "*try not to water the foliage of deciduous trees in the hottest time of the day to avoid burning the leaves*" is a myth. Water beads on the leaves will evaporate before they could really act as a lens to magnify the sun and burn anything. Ergo, a misty spray in the heat of the day is OK.

Fertilizer

Fertilizing is normally curtailed during the heat of summer. Towards the middle to end of summer, it is time to reduce the nitrogen intake for the plants. Nitrogen is no longer needed because the growing period is almost over. In late August, a 0-10-10 fertilizer should be used. This will help harden off twigs and roots, and help set buds for flowering varieties.

If you use the soaking method for watering, liquid fertilizer can be added to water. Any available plant fertilizer will work, but a product called Dyna-Gro was highly recommended by Paul because it has all the essential nutrients and trace elements for optimum growth and health.

Pruning

In August, avoid doing heavy pruning. Pruning will encourage new late growth that will not harden off before the coming fall frost.

Wire

Keep an eye on the wiring to make sure the trunk and branches are not growing around the wire. To avoid scars that will take years to heal over, immediately remove any suspect wire. Late summer is the preferred time to wire conifers.

Location

Proper air circulation reduces heat stress. If your plants are in direct sunlight, make sure they are far enough away from the wall, fence or whatever so that the heat from these surfaces won't reflect back and cook your trees.

Trees, like the Japanese maple, that are sensitive to full sun should be located where they partially shaded from the hot afternoon sun.