

## APRIL MONTHLY TIPS

Well you can sure tell that the growing season is here, I've had to do a lot of pruning and pinching, it's a challenge to up keep with it. Everything is awake and growing! If you haven't already started semi-tropicals (Ficus and figs) you might want to wait for that 65 – 70 degree mark. A safe rule to remember, when root pruning/repotting South Texas natives and semi-tropicals, is to wait until the lowest temperature of the night stays above 65 to 70 degrees. I and others have had success repotting at earlier dates in the season, when we do it we have to give it all the things it needs like the correct high and low temperatures every 24 hours, the correct light and humidity. It's the same way you treat an "indoor bonsai" during the winter....Well on second thought we might as well wait until that "70 degrees" to be safe. I try not to take too many risks. I really don't like to lose a loved tree. We just need to be patient. It's too early in the season to repot your tropicals. Tropicals need to be repotted in mid-summer (Fukien tea, Bahamas Black Olive, Buttonwood). When repotting, be sure to wire the tree securely in the pot to give it good stability against the winds. Putting rocks on top of the soil for a few days can also help brace the tree against the seasonal winds.

It's **NOT** recommended to re-pot any deciduous trees that you need to root prune. If you must re-pot due to problems with a tree, change the pot or repot it in larger container with fresh soil. DO NOT prune the roots. Deciduous trees have very tender roots during the growing season.

April is a very windy month for us; the first part of May will be also. Watch the soils every day so they do not dry out. As the heat increases so will the water needs. Inspect the bonsai from top to bottom, also inspect the drain holes. Inspect for ANY and all insects and treat accordingly. If you discover an infestation treat according to the label of the pesticide. I try to spray with insecticide and apply fungicide at least once every 4 weeks.

Pretty much everybody's back yards are growing pretty rigorously by now, so do not forget to prune, pinch and also fertilize. When pinching back on most trees (except junipers) you want to pinch back to the second or third node of leaves to reduce leaf size and node length. Elm trees have alternating leaves and should be pinched down to the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> leaf so it will grow back in the direction you'd want the branch to grow. Be sure to alternate the direction you pinch on different branches so all the branches don't end up growing into each other. Maples have opposing leaves and should be pinched to the second node. As the two buds emerge, pinch back the one you don't want or is growing in the wrong direction. The soon you pinch the young, tender emerging leaves the shorter the nodes will be, I've used tweezers to get the very tiny leaves. I read that the Japanese also use a magnifying glass to see the emerging leaves.

Flowering trees are either setting buds or are already starting to bloom. Feed them regularly with a good blooming fertilizer one that has a high phosphorus number (like Super Bloom). Feed others with 20-20-20 or a good time released fertilizer. Fertilize all others with their appropriate type. You can mix your fertilizers with fungicide when you applying.

Please note that the information and repotting schedules are suggested guidelines for the Coastal Bend and South Texas area.