

February Monthly Tips

Well, are you prepared for the new growing season? It is closer than you think! Keep your eyes on your deciduous trees, you want to root prune/repot them before the buds start swelling. The window of opportunity can come and go real fast down here. If you have several to do, then you can do like I do and start repotting them in early February and protect them from temperatures that get below 45.

When root pruning, remove 1/3 to 1/2 of the roots and leave the fine "hair" roots. If the branches need wiring or pruning, do it before you repot, because it is easier to shape them without leaves.

Make sure you tightly wire your repotted trees into their pot. We want to protect our newly potted tree from high winds. I also use rocks around the base of the tree, being careful not to harm the roots. The 1st few weeks after repotting are a crucial time for the new roots to anchor the tree to the pot. The "newly grown" roots are delicate, so do NOT fertilize for a few weeks, the new soil will have plenty of nutrients.

After you repot, bring it out to get some well deserve filtered or shaded sun for few days, then place it accordingly to the needs of the species. Watch out for cold weather that might come screaming in during the end of winter.

Wait for a few weeks or so before you start trimming and pinching the new growth. Trimming branches increases branching and lets the light in so your plant will stay healthy. The more you trim and pinch, the better the "ramification" gets. Trim the new branch down to 2 or 3 leaves; continue this through-out the growing season. When trimming remember the basics, remove crossing, spoke and the up & down branches. **Remember to check the species to see *when* it should be trimmed, we do not want to cut off any branches too soon that might be flowering &/or fruiting.**

Watch the soils every day so they do not dry out. All soils must be free draining. It is best to screen all your soils to promote good drainage, air flow and to get rid of the "fines"/dust. A good mix should be around 50% organic such as pine bark or fir bark and some good potting soil, and 50% inorganic such as Akadama, granite, Haydite, Kanuma, expanded shale, or coarse sand. Adjust your formula accordingly to suit each species. Experiment with your own combinations and see what works best for your trees.

Inspect the bonsai from top to bottom.

With the *warmer* weather we have during "winter" we should inspect for ANY and all insects and treat accordingly. I have always applied the practice of "an ounce of prevention", I try to spray with insecticide and apply fungicide at least once every 4 weeks. If you discover an infestation treat according to the label of the pesticide.

Please note that the information is suggested safe guidelines for the Coastal Bend and South Texas area