

# RealEstate

## **BONSAI – IV GREEN HOUSE Art of transplanting Maj Gen C.S. Bewli**

A bonsai cannot be kept in the same soil over a number of years because the soil becomes poor in nutrients needed by the tree. The soil also becomes impermeable to air and water and gradually gets used up, leaving the plant pot bound with a matted network of roots with hardly any soil surrounding these. Ultimately, the regeneration of roots slows down and stops eventually until the roots are cut back from time to time. How often this is done depends upon the age and species of the plant. As a rule of thumb, fast growing and fairly young plants should be transplanted once in a year and old specimens and slow growing ones will last two to three years in the same soil.



### **Best time to transplant**

Transplantation of most of the tropical species of plants can be done at any time of the year, but the best season to transplant is undoubtedly the beginning of the spring and up to the time when the first buds break i.e. when the plant is about to start growth again. This gives the plant the best possible opportunity to absorb the root shock and re-establish itself quickly.

### **Using fertilisers**

As the environment of a bonsai is artificial since it grows in a small amount of soil, it is easy for a bonsai to become deficient in nutrients needed to sustain life. Bonsai uses carbon, hydrogen and oxygen derived from the air to manufacture food. The main elements nitrogen, phosphorous and potash along with some trace elements are added to the bonsai compost as fertilisers once in 4-5 weeks during the growth period to accelerate the growth.

The health of a bonsai will further improve if some bone meal, a slow releasing phosphorous fertiliser and neem cake manure mixed with some wood ash are also added to the bonsai soil once in 4-5 weeks during the growth period.

### **Ornamentation Moss and ground cover**

Moss and other living miniature plants greatly complement the mini trees and give an impression of a velvety carpet. A bonsai having its soil covered with moss looks much more mature, firmly rooted and more stable. Moss not only enhances the beauty of a bonsai but also prevents the moisture from evaporating from the soil too rapidly.

Rocks and driftwood with some theme result in a beautiful complement to the bonsai. To further add to the bonsai design miniature sculptures such as huts, birds, animals and many others made from porcelain can be used. Care should be taken to ensure that the colour and size of these sculptures complement the tree rather than overdoing and dominating it.

## **Trays**

When the tree starts to approach bonsai status, it is time to find a tray that complements the design and brings out the beauty of the plant. Changing to a better tray is often the quickest way to improve the quality of bonsai. Bonsai trays are available in various sizes, shapes, colours and materials in different price range.

The shapes may be round, oval, square, rectangular or hexagonal with different textures. Selecting the right kind of tray is a very challenging job to ensure that the style and shape of tray matches the bonsai plant. The concept of such selection of the tray is same as selection of a frame for painting.

## **Display**

Displaying bonsai is an art and for a good bonsai presentation, it should be placed on a sleek looking stand/table to view at an ideal viewing height.

## **Daily care**

- Most bonsais die due to dehydration. Water only when the top one cm of the soil gets dry till it runs out of the drainage holes from the bottom of the tray. During summer, plants need water daily and if trays are of less height then they may need water twice or thrice as the soil tends to dry faster. During winters, however, the requirement of water is less; more so in the case of evergreens.
- The compost used should be porous and rich in nutrients.
- Leaf pruning during growth period is essential to encourage new growth and maintain the right shape.
- Root pruning helps in encouraging fibrous roots which are more efficient in absorbing moisture and nutrients from the soil.
- Use of fertilisers should be restricted to the growing season..
- Bonsai should be placed where light is available for three to four hours a day. Flower and fruit bearing plants need more light.

## **To be concluded**