

RealEstate

GREEN HOUSE

Bonsai Propagation

Prim `n Proper

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It is imperative for the serious bonsai growers to know the various techniques of propagating plants. Plants are propagated from seeds, cuttings, layering and grafting. The exotic variety of trees which are not locally available can be grown from seeds.

Cuttings

Propagation from cuttings is very handy when a large number of plants of the same species are required for group planting. Three to four inch long cuttings are taken from a healthy plant for rooting.

A pot with moist coarse sand is taken and 1-2 inch deep holes are made with a chop stick. The pot is watered, after all the cuttings are placed one by one in the holes. After the excess water is drained, the pot is enclosed in a fresh polythene bag and placed in a shady and fairly warm area. For successful rooting, the soil should remain moist. Rooting period varies for different species and fresh roots sprout when rooting takes place.

Layering technique



Ground layering and grafting



There are two methods of layering, ground layering and aerial layering. With these techniques of propagation, desired bonsai can be created in a short time.

Some of the techniques used for propagating bonsais

Ground layering

A fairly long, flexible and a healthy branch from the mother plant, which is nearest the roots is selected before the advent of spring, and is stripped of all its leaves except two or three at its apex. A thin strip of bark is removed from the part of the branch to be buried and rooting hormone is applied to this bare part before burying it. The branch is pulled down 5 to 6 inches of its length and is buried under the soil in a pot placed near the mother plant. If necessary, U clamps can be used to hold it down or it can be pressed down with a stone placed at the top of the covering soil. New roots emerge within four to five months and the end nearest to the mother plant is severed and transplanted in a pot.

Aerial layering

Aerial layering (gutti) is the common technique adopted by most horticulturists. With this technique, the desired bonsai can be created in a short time by making a careful selection of the branch, keeping in mind the bonsai style you wish to create.

Grafting

To create bonsai of some slow growing species grafting is essential. This process is also used to create branches at suitable places on a bonsai. The methods used are, approach grafting, wedge grafting and side grafting.



Schefflera (named also Umbrella Plant or Gold Capella) is very easy to propagate with leaf cuttings or by air layering

Pesticide spray

Like any other plant, bonsai trees are susceptible to attacks by pests or diseases and can be severely damaged because of their fairly small size. However, in a healthy bonsai the risk of infection is less. Proper bonsai care is the best prevention, so it becomes imperative to keep the plant clean, provide sufficient light, humidity and fresh air. Regular spray of systemic and contact insecticides keeps the pests away.

Pruning

Root pruning is an integral part of creating a bonsai. No plant can stay in the same container indefinitely. Bonsais are not just maintained above the ground, but their roots also need attention. Bonsai do best if there is an even balance of growth both above and

below the soil. Root pruning means removal of the bottom one third of the root ball with a saw and gradually loosening the roots from the bottom and sides of the root ball. Thick and sick roots are clipped to encourage the growth of smaller fine root hairs as they are much more efficient in absorbing water and other nutrients from the soil.

Root pruning is done when:

- plant becomes pot bound and is partially pushed out of the pot on its own.
- it becomes difficult for the water to penetrate the soil.
- the plant does not show signs of growth even after fertilizing.

DOS AND DON'TS WHILE ADDING FERTILISERS	
■ Water your bonsai thoroughly before adding fertiliser.	■ Don't feed your bonsai just after re-potting. It should be fed only after six weeks of re-potting to avoid burning of new roots.
■ Follow the direction on the label of the fertiliser package.	■ Don't over fertilise as it will result in low growth.
■ Check for the ratio of main important elements nitrogen, phosphorous and potash when purchasing a fertiliser.	■ Don't add fertiliser to a dry bonsai.
■ Use fertiliser regularly during growing season.	■ Don't use liquid fertiliser on a rainy day as it can be washed out of the soil before the tree can benefit from it.

Concluded