

MONTHLY TIPS

Ed.'s Note: The following is a re-print of the Monthly Tip from the September 2006 edition of the newsletter.

PRIME TIME FOR PLANTING

Do you have a tree in a pot or bonsai container that has shown little growth during the last growing season (or seasons)? Consider removing the tree from the container and planting it in the ground. If you do so you will be amazed at its growth in just one or two years.

Fall is an ideal time to plant nearly anything - perennials, shrubs or trees - in any area where the ground remains unfrozen for at least a month after the first killing frost. Why? Because of the roots. When a tree is planted most of its roots die. Before the tree can regain its former vigor it needs to replace those roots. But in spring, the tree wants to produce new shoots, leaves, flowers. Roots will regrow - but slowly. In late summer the plant is shutting down its leaf growth and is expanding its root system. Below the soil good growing conditions persist long after the first frost. Trees transplanted in the fall will focus all their growing power on regenerating lost roots. Then, when spring arrives the trees will have a much larger root system that is better able to sustain the burden of vigorous leaf production. Roots grow much better as the soil cools into to 60 degree range than they do in the 80 degree heat of summer. Roots keep growing vigorously until the soil temperature drops into the low 40's - and some growth continues as long as the soil remains unfrozen.

Thus, if you want to add girth and strength to your trees considered planting some of your trees in the ground this fall.

PREPARE FOR WINTER

Prepare to store your bonsai for winter. You must provide protection from wind, sun, animals and wide temperature swings. Even an evergreen can lose moisture through its foliage throughout the winter. If the soil is frozen the tree will have no way to replace the lost moisture and can die as the result of dehydration.

There are many ways to take care of your trees during the winter:

Place your trees in a cold frame in November or early December. On warm days open the cold frame. You must keep the interior temperature from reaching 60 degrees or else the tree might be forced out of dormancy into new growth. bury the trees in the ground You can remove the trees from their containers and set them in the ground for the winter. After the ground is frozen the soil should be heavily mulched to keep the soil frozen. Make sure the area selected is protected from strong winds.

Store your trees in your garage. Some members heat their garage to 30 degrees - but I am not sure this is necessary. Trees stored in a garage will have good air circulation and, therefore, are less susceptible to disease. The disadvantage is that there is little moisture in the garage so you must watch the trees for signs of dryness. Water when the trees appear dry.

Cover your trees with micro-foam. Stack you trees on the ground. Cover them with the micro-foam with the smooth plastic coating facing inside. Make certain that the plants are tightly sealed - no air leaks. The plastic coating prevents any moisture loss, thus, keeping the plants from becoming dehydrated. And no watering is needed.

-Jim Hagan