

## **BONSAI IS EASY**

Keeping bonsai is not a difficult, or time consuming, pastime. Understanding the basic requirements of any plant will help to understand what is necessary to keep a bonsai alive.

Most bonsai are created from trees or shrubs that would normally grow outside, in our normal climate, where they have sufficient natural light, air circulation, and moisture, either naturally from rain, or artificially from the tap.

Bonsai are no different, they need air, light and water. Just having sufficient levels of these three things will keep your bonsai alive. How often should you water it? Enough to keep it moist. Planted in a small pot, bonsai will dry out quite quickly. In some weather, this may be as often as a couple of times a day, at other times it may be once every 2 or 3 days. Some things that you can do to make it grow better would be to fertilise, trim, root prune, and control any pests.

Myths about bonsai that should be dispelled include the following: Bonsai are stunted neglected trees that are kept from the brink of death to remain small, bonsai are bound and tortured trees, bonsai should be kept inside all of the time.

Bonsai are far from neglected and tortured, if this was the case, the tree would not be healthy and would die, or at least look like it was unhealthy. Bonsai are not stunted, as to create healthy bonsai, we must help them to grow as much as possible. This is done by feeding and watering them regularly, trimming the roots and providing fresh nutrient full growing mediums for them to continue growing in. The subsequent new growth that occurs is continually trimmed to maintain the desired shape of the tree.

The wire that you sometimes see on a bonsai is to create the desired shape. It is not there to slow the growth of the tree. Branches and trunks are wired, and then placed into the desired position, once set, the wire is removed.

Indoor display of bonsai should be intermittent. A couple of days inside occasionally would be fine. In the case of a tropical tree as bonsai, for example, the Moreton Bay Fig, this could be kept inside for longer periods with sufficient natural light and air circulation. Tropical bonsai should be kept away from frosts.

Given the right instruction on the care of bonsai, anyone could keep one alive. Why not try your hand at creating a living work of art.