

# Bonsai Tree

*Trimming, Sculpting and Pruning*





# **BONSAI TREES: GROWING, TRIMMING, SCULPTING AND PRUNING**

## **PART 4**

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# INNIE OR OUTTIE?

One school of thought is that trees are outdoor plants and putting them into pots does not transform them into indoor plants. Many believe that if you bring bonsai inside, they will die. While not necessarily true, you will probably see much better results if you let your bonsai flourish outside rather than indoors.

Just remember that you are going to be growing and cultivating a tree in a tray or pot. Trees need lots of sunlight and care to grow. Just because the trees are in a tray or pot instead of the ground doesn't mean they don't need the same care.

However, Bonsai are still trees and must have outdoor living conditions. Trees need good light, good humidity levels, good air circulation and importantly, many species NEED the cold of winter to go dormant. Inside our homes, trees receive comparatively poor light levels and the dry air with low humidity levels created by central heating systems can cause many problems.

There are species that will tolerate indoor conditions and with the correct placement and care can thrive. There are also many species that are not hardy enough to tolerate the winter cold. But, these are in the minority.

It is far more difficult to cultivate indoor Bonsai than outdoor Bonsai. Outdoor species very rarely die immediately when grown inside, they can survive for months. However they slowly lose their health and vigor in the adverse conditions they have to cope with, and become susceptible to bugs and disease until they finally start to show outward signs of ill-health; yellowing leaves, lose of foliage and eventually death.

There are many varieties of plants that do well as an indoor bonsai such as ficus, aralia, azalea, Norfolk pine, serissa, gardenia, or boxwood. Note that these are all woody-stemmed plants and can have their limbs wired to direct the growth.

Tropical and subtropical varieties can not tolerate tempers below 40 - 50 degrees F. These plants can be left outside when the temperatures stay above this. Light inside the house should be by filtered sunlight from an east, south, or west window. Grow lights 12 hours per day work well. Outside in summer place in partial shade

There is NO coniferous species that can tolerate indoor cultivation for more than 2 or 3 years. This is important to keep in mind as most successful bonsai trees are of the coniferous species.

In mild climates, temperate bonsai should remain outdoors year round. In cold climates, temperate climate plants should be grown outdoors during the warm seasons of the year, but will need winter protection. It is possible to grow temperate climate plants indoors in winter if they are first given the required period of dormancy.

The urge is strong for beginners to grow their bonsai indoors. Although a few traditional species for bonsai may be grown indoors year round if they are given a dormant rest period, you should be aware that this requires some skills usually obtained from growing bonsai for a few years. We can safely say that as a beginner, you should begin with growing your bonsai outdoors.

Alright, then, how do you start your own bonsai masterpiece? Let's first consider the tools you'll need.