

Shimpaku Juniper (Juniperus Chinesis) Bonsai Care

About The Shimpaku Juniper

Shimpaku are native asian Juniper species that are iconic in the world of bonsai. Some of the oldest bonsai in the world are of these species.

Placement

Place juniper specimens in full sun year-round. If you happen to live in a very hot, dry climate, though, consider placing them in afternoon shade. You might notice that your junipers become slightly greener or bluer under shade cloth. This is normal and can be quite dramatically beautiful.

Watering

Juniper bonsai do well if kept slightly moist. As a general guideline, check the water twice per day during the growing season from early Spring through late Fall. Most juniper bonsai will need to be watered at least once per day, and sometimes twice per day, during this period. Water as the soil surface becomes dry and mist the foliage when watering in the morning. In the winter months, check once per day and water as needed, which could be as little as once every 3-5 days depending on the climate and the individual juniper bonsai.

Fertilizing

Fertilizing junipers will be dependent on the stage of development of the tree. For example, younger junipers are best fertilized with a high-nitrogen synthetic fertilizer to rapidly increase their size and vigor. Older, more refined juniper bonsai should be fertilized with a milder organic fertilizer with a lower nitrogen value. All junipers,

regardless of development, should be fertilized from the early growing season through late Fall.

Pruning & Trimming

Pruning juniper is a relatively easy process and is best done at two or three optimal times throughout the growing season. First, in early Spring, allow your Juniper to grow freely and do not prune the new shoots as they emerge. Allowing the growth to elongate will assist with growth hormone transport throughout the tree, producing more vigorous root growth and subsequent shoot growth. Once the new shoots have fully elongated, typically by early summer, prune each shoot back using scissors. Be sure to cut the shoot itself and not the foliage tips.

After the first pruning, junipers will flush a second time. Allow this secondary flush to elongate again for six to eight weeks, then prune again. Repeat this process throughout the growing season as needed. By pruning junipers in this way, you can easily create a full, well-developed specimen in a short period of time.

Additionally, juniper will likely shed interior foliage as the temperatures start to heat up in summer. This yellowing growth is referred to as toya in Japanese. This is a normal process wherein the tree is shedding weaker foliage in favor of stronger external foliage to help offset over-transpiration. In order to limit the amount of toya produced by a juniper bonsai, consider removing some growth from the tree earlier in the Spring season. For example, remove foliage on the undersides of pads, as well as crotch growth and unnecessary branches in the tree's design. Once again, though, be sure to leave the extending shoots intact and uncut at this point in Spring.

Repotting

Repotting juniper is best done in early Spring just as the foliage begins to return to a normal green color. This usually happens sometime in March in the northern hemisphere. When repotting, do not remove all of the original soil, but rather leave a core of older soil beneath the trunk to preserve the health of the tree. Avoid cutting too many roots as well, as this can often cause the juniper to revert to juvenile foliage in the subsequent growing season. This is particularly true with Itoigawa Shimpaku.

Use a free-draining soil medium, such as a mixture of akadama, lava rock and pumice in a ratio of 1:1:1. The soil particle size should be approximately 3/16 inch (4mm) for medium and large trees, and slightly small for shohin size bonsai.

Diseases, Insects & Other Pests

Japanese juniper are susceptible to a number of pests including aphids, bagworms, borers, scale and spider mites. The most common diseases that affect junipers are tip blight and cedar-apple rust.

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