



GROWING AN OAK

Bonsai
Trees

Soils
Fertilizer
Sundries

Bonsai Southwest

Pots
Tools

Pre-Bonsai
Suiseki

0781 714 7416

www.bonsaisouthwest.co.uk

bonsaisouthwest@hotmail.com

Position

Oak trees prefer an airy place in full sun during the growing season. The European Oak, the White Oak and other northern oak species are frost hardy when they are growing in the ground, but they need winter protection when they are planted in containers. A cold but frost-free greenhouse, garage or shed is a good winter place for an oak bonsai tree.

DO NOT GROW INDOORS.

Watering

Never allow soil to dry out, keep the soil evenly moist. Check the soil daily but only water when necessary.

Water thoroughly with plenty of water allowing it to flow through the soil and flush out stale air and any built up chemical salt deposits.

In winter they must be kept slightly moist. In most cases tap water is just fine for watering. Watering daily as a routine when it is not required, results in soggy compost which will lead to lack of vigour, root rot and eventually death. Learn to water correctly for best results.

Feeding

Apply solid organic fertilizer every four weeks or use a balanced liquid fertilizer every week during the growing season. Always apply the liquid fertilizer on moist soil.

Pruning, Wiring & Development

Hard pruning is done in early spring before the buds open. Strong terminal buds can also be removed then. New shoots are cut back leaving two leaves. Don't defoliate oaks completely because it would weaken them too much, but you can remove the largest leaves now and then. Trim the upper parts of the crown attentively because they grow stronger than the lower branches.

Allowing lower branches to grow and keeping the apex under control will help to develop taper in the trunk.

When oaks are wired be careful to remove the wire before it bites into the bark. Wire marks will be visible for a very long time. Guy wires can be a good choice instead.

Repotting

Young oaks should be repotted every 3 or 4 years in spring, older ones every four or five years. As the oak bonsai tree needs a lot of water and nutrients, choose a slightly larger pot and use a soil mix which can retain enough water but is still well-draining. Use a free-draining soil medium, such as a mixture of akadama, lava rock and pumice in a ratio of 4:1:1. The soil particle size should be approximately 2mm—6mm for medium and large trees, and slightly small for shohin size bonsai. If in any doubt please seek professional help or advice.

Don't repot for the sake of it. Repot only when the tree has obviously filled the pot with roots or when water will not percolate into the soil and drain freely.

Pests and diseases

Oaks often suffer from powdery mildew. A mixture of 10 g baking soda, 10 ml rapeseed oil, one drop of dishwashing detergent and 1 l of water can help when sprayed repeatedly at intervals of several days. Less often oak leaf blister, bacterial leaf scorch and pine-oak gall rust occur. In severe cases ask a professional gardener for help and use a specific pesticide. Some insects and mites cause galls which do not harm the tree in most cases. Aphids, scale, leafminers and oakworms (caterpillars of diverse moths) can also bother oak trees. You can try to squeeze, scratch off or collect these or blow them away with a jet of water instead of or before using chemical pesticides. Beware of the caterpillars of the oak processionary moth whose toxic hairs are dangerous for humans. A winter wash with lime sulphur will eradicate overwintering pests and help to control fungal problems..

DISCLAIMER: The content provided in this article is not warranted or guaranteed by Bonsai Southwest. The content provided is intended for educational purposes in order to introduce to the reader key horticultural considerations. We are not liable for any negative consequences that may result from implementing any information covered in our articles or tutorials.

If you have any worries or questions please don't hesitate to contact me or seek more local professional help and advice.