

Subject: Bonsai Basics - Bugs, Junipers, Watering 101 and More!
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From: Zen Garden and Bonsai
To: Janet Nguyen

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The Zen Garden Newsletter

Hi Everyone,

The response to our first newsletter was fantastic and I found there were more questions than I could answer in one newsletter! There were some recurring themes such as bugs, watering questions, and questions about particular trees.

So today we'll deal with:

- Bugs Killed My Juniper - Meet the Spider Mite
- Unhappy Juniper
- Watering 101 - Are You Dry Yet?
- Up Close (but not too personal) - Meet Eugenia Myrtifolia: The Brush Cherry
- Online Information - There is a ton of junk on the internet, but there are also some excellent information sources: Today's Link du Jour - Serissa

Bugs Killed My Juniper- Meet the Spider Mite

If you're growing your Procumbens nana Juniper indoors, the dry air can be a problem, particularly so when your tree becomes infested with spider mites.

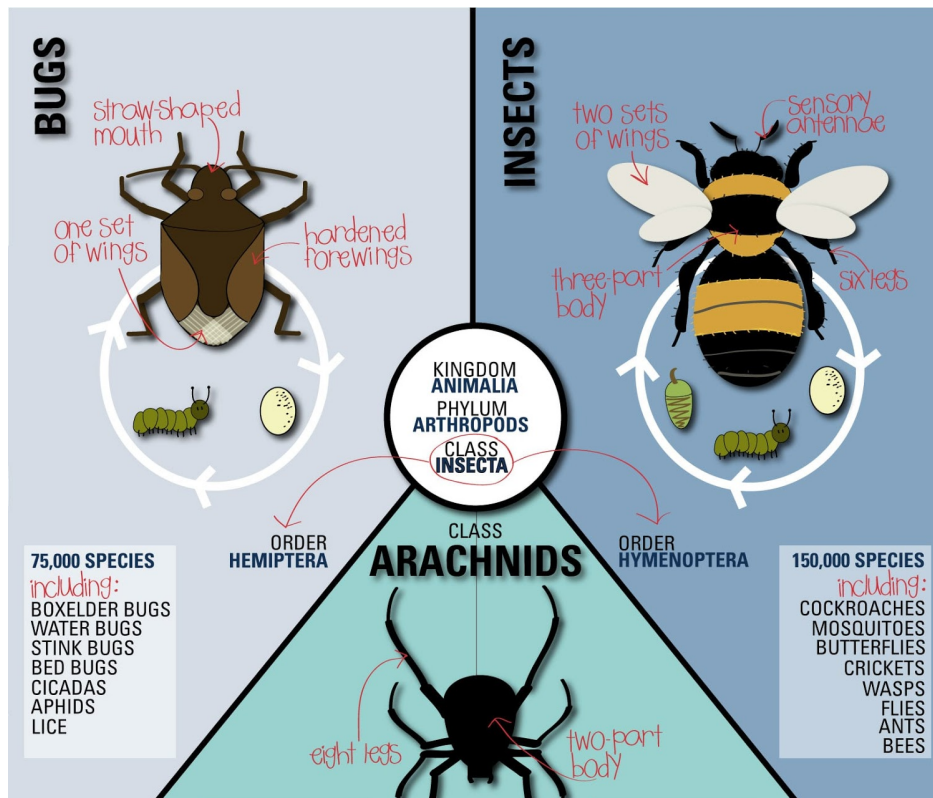
They're not truly bugs! Spider mites are a type of arachnid - a cousin of the spider. Spiders are not bugs, nor are they insects...who knew? But they literally suck, and that is how they will damage your tree.

Spider mites will haunt the underside of the foliage and are most often given away by the webs you'll see all over your tree when you put your glasses on and take a close look. If you cared to give the plant a shake

grasses on and take a close look. If you cared to give the plant a shake over a white surface you'll probably see these tiny reddish assassins scurrying around. Squash away or wash away!

I don't care for pesticides and do my very best to avoid them. If you feel the same way and suspect spider mites have haunted your tree you could do the following:

1. Wrap the pot and cover the soil with plastic so it stays relatively dry and wash down the whole tree. Try to get the underside of the foliage - I use my sprayer in my kitchen sink. If you don't have a sprayer take it into the shower.
2. What, you've never showered with a plant before?
3. Rub the foliage gently with your fingers to wipe the mites off. Oh, for heaven's sake don't freak out, they're just tiny bugs. They won't hurt you!
4. When you're done, take steps to raise the local humidity around the tree by either misting it daily or placing it on a big tray with pebbles and add water. The pebbles add surface area to encourage evaporation and also raise the tree bottom out of the water.
5. Don't hesitate to repeat the exercise a week or so later, or as needed. Try not to wash away the soil and when you mist, cover the soil so you're not adding too much water to the pot. Misting is an easy way to over-water. I kid you not!





Unhappy Juniper

My only criticism of the Juniper as a beginner tree is that they don't give you a lot of feedback. For example a Pomegranate that needs water is noticeably wilted but a Juniper won't show the same signs. Junipers dry out when they are unhappy. They don't turn yellow and wilt, they turn brown, sad, and somewhat crispy. Not good.

If you pay attention to how they do it can help you diagnose the problem. And if you see a problem, don't ignore it!

Decent Rules of Thumb:

- If the branch tips are dying back (brown, dry, brittle): suspect a root problem and the number one cause of root problems is overwatering.
- Interior or bottom foliage turning brown: could be that not enough light is getting to it or if you see the presence of anything that looks like a web, suspect spider mites.
- An overall pale appearance (I hate this one): The tree could be getting too much sun and/or being underwatered. If those check out it could be a nutrient deficiency. If your tree is a pale olive green and also brittle, it might be dead.

Watering 101 - Are You Dry Yet?

Watering is the most difficult part of bonsai care. You can kill your bonsai by overwatering or under watering. The only difference in the end is that generally, under watering will kill them faster.

I think most of the trees that die are compelled to shirk off their mortal coils because they have been methodically drowned. This drowning causes root rot and prevents them from drawing moisture into the plant. Ironically, a tree with root rot caused by overwatering usually has the droopy look of a tree that desperately needs water.

If you think that watering bonsai correctly is harder than watering regular houseplants, you're right. It is. A big part of that is the pot. Those small, shallow bonsai pots will hang onto water far longer than a taller pot. It's

a gravity thing. I'll bore you to death with the details later.

Most trees will easily tolerate a little drying out (Serissa's don't care for it and a Formosa firethorn that dries out will punish you).

The only way you will really know when a tree needs water is to pay attention every day:

- Look at the colour of the soil, as it dries out it will look lighter.
- Pick up the pot, as it dries out your Bonsai will weigh less.
- Work your finger into the soil and feel. Dry soil is warmer and harsher to the touch, and I think we are mostly familiar with wet soil!

Follow these steps consistently, because the differences are all relative.

Remember :

- Don't water a tree that already feels wet.
- Never let your bonsai sit in water for any length of time.
- When you water, be sure that you're soaking the entire root ball. It is not unknown for the outside to be soaking wet and the middle of the rootball to be dry and hard as a rock.
- If you tilt your bonsai to the side, does water run out the drainage hole? If so, let it drain completely before you put it back.

Imagine a washcloth. Soak it. Now, wring it out. Twist every bit of water out if it that you can. How wet does it feel? One to two days after your bonsai soil feels like that, water it. And watch out for the exceptions. If your tree is outside on a hot day it will probably need to be watered every day.

Up Close (but not too personal): Meet Eugenia Myrtifolia - The Brush Cherry



Eugenia sp. or Syzygium sp.

Brush Cherry Care: The Key? Be Consistent

First of all, let's establish that these trees are closely related:

Brush Cherry - *Eugenia myrtifolia* (also called *Syzygium paniculatum*)

Jaboticaba - *Eugenia cauliflora*

Surinam Cherry - *Eugenia uniflora*

The Brush Cherry is a sub tropical evergreen. It's a vigorous grower. It likes to be warm-hot in the summer and about 60 degrees F in the winter. It does NOT like to be cold. Freeze it = Kill it (trust me, I'm guilty of doing just that)

Lighting:

The Brush Cherry loves the light but can tolerate lower light. In terms of lower light, what is found indoors is basically about as bright as you can give it. If placed outdoors in summer - and if you can, please do - it can

usually tolerate full sun, although partial shade is recommended in the late afternoon in the hottest part of the summer. Remember that the more direct sun it gets the more you'll be watering it!

Temperature:

In summer, give it the heat, It will happily tolerate cooler temps in the winter - around mid 60's. What it does NOT like is drafts. Keep away from heat and air conditioning vents. This bonsai also doesn't care for a lot of change- so don't move it from place to place just for the heck of it.

Watering:

Pay attention to your Brush Cherry and watch out for salt in its water. Its first choice is to be constantly damp, not wet, damp (see "wrung out washcloth" in the watering article). If outside in the summer it will take a lot of water. It won't need as much in the winter.

Do your best to ensure it doesn't dry out. Eugenia's like their water as much as they like their lighting and positioning - consistent.

You can mist this tree to bring up the local humidity but don't bother doing that if it is outside or in the summertime. If you're blasting the air conditioning all the time then it will need to be misted.

If you can use rainwater to water it- great. If not, unless your water is super hard you should be ok. I don't have the time for rainwater either!

Feeding:

Eugenia likes to grow on the acidic side, so a food recommended for Azaleas would be good and you can even add something like Miracid on occasion but don't get heavy handed with it. Feed according to directions in the summer and cut at least in half in the winter - maybe cut back even more. As much as I personally prefer "organic" fertilizers that are specialized for bonsai they do cost a fortune and they're a little hard to find. So, instead go ahead with a commercial balanced plant food and follow the directions.

Training:

You'll get better results shaping your Brush Cherry with pruning than with wiring. Once it throws out new shoots, wait for the growth to harden off. You can tell this by the leaves transitioning from a soft feeling and bright green colour to a harder feel and darker green colour. The leaves will feel as if they have toughened up the outer surface of the leaves. After it has hardened, trim the new shoots back to 1-2 pairs of leaves.

You CAN wire, but this is best done on very young growth and you must watch the wire as it will scar the tree (like forever!) if it is left on too long.

Repotting:

You'll probably need to repot your tree every 2-3 years and if you choose to put it back in the same pot you can trim half the feeder roots.

Pests and diseases:

Pests: Watch out for mealy bugs, red spider mites, and aphids. All of which can easily be removed by washing off with water- a jet of it will take out the aphids, the mealy bugs can be wiped off with a wet Q-tip or paper towel and red spider mites can be washed away and then kept away by misting for a while, they thrive in dry air.

Link Du Jour

Serissa:

<https://www.bonsaiempire.com/tree-species/serissa>

Stay Safe & Wash Your Hands!

Well, that is it for this newsletter. I will continue to answer your questions as they come in. If you have a fellow bonsai lover forward them this newsletter for some tips!

Also, we have finally got bonsai pots and tables into our inventory. Take a look below.

Remember to email me if you have any questions about your bonsai. I will make sure to answer it in the next newsletter!

Featured Products

We have added bonsai pots!



10" Blue Oval Ceramic Bonsai Pot

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