

BONSAI IN TUCSON

A Brief History of Bonsai

Bonsai first appeared in China over a thousand years ago. Bonsai means “tree in a pot.” Bonsai trees are inspired by the landscapes around us and in our imagination. During the twelfth century A.D. bonsai was introduced to Japan via Zen Buddhism. According to The Bonsai Site, “The ideals and philosophy of bonsai were greatly changed over the years. For the Japanese, bonsai represents a fusion of strong ancient beliefs with the Eastern philosophies of the harmony between [people], the soul and nature.”

Plant Selection and Maintenance

Some of the plants that are consistently used in bonsai art are: Chinese Elm, Dwarf Pomegranate, English Box (Buxus), Ficus, Jade Tree, Japanese Maple, and Juniper. You may also choose to plant trees native to this region. Caring for bonsai in southeastern Arizona is different than in other places. Do not put a bonsai in direct sunlight. You will need to water your bonsai three times a day. To water a bonsai you can either immerse it in a container that is no higher than the bonsai pot (until the soil is moistened), or you can gently pour water on the soil around the plant using a watering can. If you choose to use a watering can be sure to water the sides from an angle, not directly from the top. For more information about soil mixtures, pruning, and general care, please see the Phoenix Bonsai Society website (www.phoenixbonsai.com).

Further Information

The Tucson Bonsai Society and the Bonsai Center of Arizona can be reached at (520) 722-2000. Southern Arizona Bonsai Enthusiasts can be reached at (520) 825-9685. Please contact these organizations for information regarding regularly scheduled meetings, bonsai care, purchasing bonsai products, etc.

Midtown Master Gardener and bonsai expert Thelma Buchanan can be reached at (520) 323-0898.

For a detailed Internet guide to the art, history, care, and practice of bonsai please visit The Bonsai Site (www.bonsaisite.com). Other websites of interest include: Sleepy Hollow Bonsai (www.shbonsai.com), Bonsai Discoveries (BonsaiDiscoveries.com), and Enchanted Bonsai Gardens (www.buybonsai.com).

This report was created for the Midtown Garden Club by the 2004 staff of the Martha Cooper Summer Youth Employment and Enrichment Program