



Caring for Your Bonsai in Winter

Your bonsai needs to be outside during the winter to give it a natural dormant period. Hardy bonsai plants kept inside during the cold will suffer. Just because your plant is small doesn't mean that it doesn't have the same dormant period requirements that larger trees do. Learn how much cold your bonsai can tolerate as you make your winterizing plans.

Let your plant go dormant naturally. Plan on keeping it that way until spring. If you are over-wintering them in a cold frame or greenhouse, be sure to ventilate it on nice days. Too much heat or sunlight can start your plants growing too soon. This tender new growth could be severely damaged in a cold snap.

Your plant's roots need to be insulated from the freezing cold. Roots of plants whose pot is above the ground are in more danger of freezing than those plants whose pots are buried in the ground. Bury your bonsai, pot and all, on the east side of the house near the foundation. If you have a prolonged cold spell, make a lean-to to cover your plants. Attach a sheet of burlap to the side of the house, angle it over the plant and secure the ends with bricks.

Other options for winterizing your plants vary. You can build a simple cold frame by pounding stakes in the ground and nailing burlap around or by making a frame out of hay bales and covering the top with burlap. Also, placing your plants in a grove of trees and wrapping burlap around the trees to form a windbreak will help protect your bonsai from cold.

If the weather is severe; you can bring your plants into an unheated basement, garage or greenhouse until the weather breaks.

Wind protection is very important: bonsai plants in a windy spot are in danger of dehydration. Because the wind can dry out you plants, especially your evergreens, be sure to check the water weekly and water deeply before a cold spell.

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