



## Bonsai Trees

**F**ully grown trees 15 inches tall. Trees handmade branch by branch over decades. Miniature works of art that can survive a New England winter, bonsai trees have been cultivated since at least 4000 BC in Egypt, China and Japan—and now in the West.

You should make it a point to see some bonsai if you can. If you live near Boston, the Larz Anderson collection at the Arnold Arboretum includes dozens of old and impressive specimens, including 15 of the original Japanese plants donated by the Andersons in 1937.

Bonsais are not grown from seeds, of course. Part of the art is selecting mature stock from which a suitable trunk and main branches can be formed. Considerations include aged appearance, unusual shape and tiny leaves, but hardiness is also a factor. Trees such as Sierra Juniper, Bald Cypress and Ponderosa Pine are traditional favorites.

After selection, the first step is to encourage the branch that will become the trunk to develop roots. This can be accomplished while the stock is still part of the parent tree or in a growing medium. The next step is pruning the bonsai's trunk, leaves, branches and roots to create the beginnings of the desired form. It's often a radical process at the start. Afterwards, though, refinements become more and more subtle.

For example, by defoliating the tree midway through the season, a new canopy of much smaller leaves can be generated. Bonsai cultivators will also occasionally strip the bark from a branch to simulate the scarring effects of aging. Over the centuries many techniques have been developed to create miniature expressions of full-scale phenomena.

As you'd expect, caring for a bonsai requires years if not generations of attention. In some cases, the natural root system of the plant isn't hardy enough to go the distance and must be replaced. Regular pruning is essential to keep the bonsai's original design from being overgrown. And the process of shaping branches takes time and a delicate touch.

Cultivators of bonsai use grafting, pruning, wiring and infinite patience to achieve extraordinary effects. For example, one style of bonsai called *Cascade* emulates trees that grow downward over a pond or stream.

Forest style bonsai features multiple trees in a single container to create the effect of a small, harmonious grove.

Ishizuke style (growing in a rock) bonsai are rooted in stony crevasses, a commentary on life's challenges.

If you would like a bonsai of your own, they aren't hard to find. In fact, a few minutes of online research will point you toward an enormous variety available for delivery. Many are quite inexpensive considering how much work is involved in getting a bonsai started.

Of course, maybe you would like to create your own bonsai. Once again, instructions, tools and raw material are easy to come by. Just as when choosing a tree for your yard, look for species that are suitable for your climate. Also be sure to understand your bonsai's need for a dormant period.

Last fact, there is a classification of bonsai that includes trees just 2.5 centimeters or about one inch tall.

Aren't trees wonderful? 🌿



## The Smart Minimum

### What's the least I should do to preserve the health and beauty of my landscape?

This question is coming up so often that we thought we would address it in *leaflet*. We're all looking more closely at expenses this year and investing in trees, shrubs and turf may not seem like a priority.

Still, if you're wondering about the factors involved in a wise decision, here they are:

Your trees are major financial assets. You would probably be amazed at the replacement cost of the 10- or 12-inch trees on your property. Their beauty and usefulness aside, trees add considerably to your home's value. Ask any realtor, healthy trees are essential.

At a minimum, we'd recommend having an arborist examine your trees for signs of stress, boring insects, disease, inappropriate watering, or rank growth – likely to break in winter ice and storms. These are common problems and by the time symptoms are obvious to a layperson, significant damage can be done.

Next, consider having your shrubs hand pruned by a specialist. The secret is pruning to reveal the inner structure of the branches. That will allow maximum light to penetrate the plant as well as creating a more natural and attractive look. Pruning is a minor

investment, but one that will extend the life of your shrubs and enhance their value.

Another note on shrubs. Generally, four to five percent of your shrubs will need to be replaced every year. Others may need to be relocated to protect their health or promote growth.

Finally, think about water. Getting the right amount of water to every tree and plant consistently is vital. To us, the Smart Minimum includes assessing your use of water—if only to minimize your expense. Less is frequently more.

You have to remember that your yard isn't static; it's a living ecosystem evolving over time with many variables at work. Letting things go for a year or two might seem reasonable (Nature is self-tending, isn't it?) but it might cost you a lot more than you'll save.

As always, we're glad to send our highly qualified arborists and turf specialists to answer your questions in person. All you have to do is call. 🍀



## Introducing the Air-Spade

As arborists, we're often asked by homeowners or institutions planning construction projects:

### How close can I dig to my tree without catastrophic injury?

We used to answer with our best estimate and base our advice on 'typical' conditions. But now a new technology enables us to give you a much more precise answer.

Air-Spade allows us to check for the presence of roots without injury to the tree. We can determine the shape and size of each tree's root system with X-Ray-like precision.

Surprisingly, in many cases we don't find any danger and work can proceed. But



sometimes we do find roots in the way of proposed construction and then measures must be taken to minimize construction damage.

Trees are too valuable and take too long to grow to lose needlessly. The Air-Spade allows us to save many trees and often a good deal of money to boot. 🍀

### After a brief search with the Air-Spade this cavity reveals the extent of the roots



## World's Oldest Trees

In 1964, a curious graduate student cut down what was certainly one of the world's oldest trees, a Great Basin bristlecone pine in Nevada. "For research purposes." Although details of the story have never been fully established, most agree that the tree, nicknamed *Prometheus*, was approximately 5000 years old. A tragedy, of course, but some good has come of it in the form of greater awareness of our arboreal heritage and a concern for its preservation. In fact, the U.S. Forest Service won't even reveal the exact locations of other ancient trees.

The current record-holder, another Great Basin bristlecone pine in California named *Methuselah*, is estimated to be 4840 years old.

Technically, *Methuselah* is only half as old as *Old Tjikko*, a Norway spruce in Sweden, but *Methuselah* is an individual, continuously standing tree. The spruce is a clonal tree, which means that it sends up a new trunk from the same root system when the previous trunk dies. Each trunk lasts approximately 600 years. There are about 20 other trees in *Old Tjikko's* general neighborhood that are at least 8000 years old.

The oldest human-planted tree is believed to be the *Jaya Sri Maha Bodhi*, a Sacred Fig (*ficus religiosa*) planted in 288 BC in Sri Lanka. Considered to be a sapling of the bodhi tree under which Buddha became enlightened, this banyan has survived for millennia, carefully tended by devout Buddhists.

The *Bowthorpe Oak* in Lincolnshire, although only about 1000 years old, is the oldest oak in Great Britain. Hollow, it is now the home of sheep and chickens.

Stoutness is another quality we admire in trees. The stoutest of them all is a Montezuma Cypress located in Oaxaca, Mexico. Known as the *Tule Tree*, it has a diameter of 38.1 feet measured at breast height (dbh).

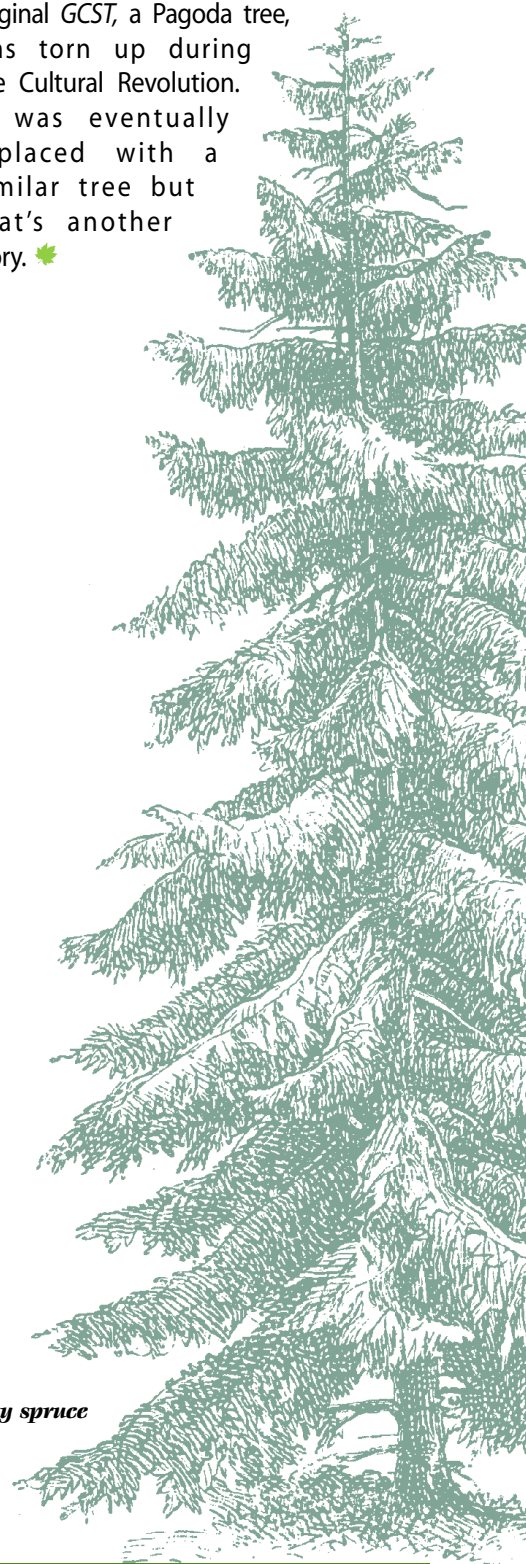
The next stoutest trees are both American. The *General Grant*, a Giant Sequoia estimated to be more than 1600 years old, has a

dbh of 29 ft. A Coast Redwood takes the bronze with a diameter of 24.4 feet.

Finally, the *Guilty Chinese Scholar Tree* in Beijing, China gets our vote for most interesting handle. Named for the last Ming emperor, who hanged himself from it, the original GCST, a Pagoda tree, was torn up during the Cultural Revolution. It was eventually replaced with a similar tree but that's another story. 🌿



*The Giant Sequoias of California*



*Norway spruce*



# No Two Seasons

No two years or seasons are ever quite the same. Spring 2009 has been cool and a bit slow to develop. This has led to long-lasting blooms on most ornamental trees and shrubs. Azaleas, flowering dogwoods and rhododendrons have been particularly striking.

Unfortunately, winter moths were more active than ever in the western suburbs. Damage has ranged from complete defoliation to light feeding. Cherry trees, fruit trees, oaks and maples were especially hard-hit. If any of your trees have been affected by winter moths, call an arborist for advice on how to keep the trees vigorous and prevent further injury



in 2010. Damage over successive years could kill your trees. Thousands in south-eastern Massachusetts have already succumbed to multiple defoliations.

You should also be aware that this has been a dry spring. Rainfall has been well under average. We suggest that

you give your valuable trees, shrubs, and turf a deep root watering once a week. Aim to wet the soil 12 inches deep. On most sites, one-inch of water is all it takes.

Finally, now is the time to examine your foundation plantings to see if they would benefit from hand pruning to control their size and improve their appearance. Natural

## EXPERIENCE OUR GUARANTEE

If you are not satisfied with any treatment or completed job, let us know.

We will resolve the situation to your satisfaction, no questions asked.

Our goal is not only to make sure your trees, shrubs, and lawn are as healthy as possible, but also to provide you with the peace of mind a satisfaction guarantee can bring.

hand pruning is much different from shearing, which merely chops off the end of each branch (and next year's new flower bud). Over time you could be left with a house surrounded by a collection of hockey pucks and chicken croquettes. Let us show you the difference. 🌿

# Calendar of Care

	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT
Review trees & landscape with arborist for summer care	█			
Plant Health Care visits & treatments	█	█	█	█
Treat to eradicate Poison Ivy	█	█	█	█
Naturally prune ornamental trees & shrubs	█	█	█	█
Subsurface fertilize ornamental & shade trees			█	█
Inspect tree structure for dormant care	█	█	█	█
Transplant & plant trees & shrubs		█	█	█
Implement landscape design & construction projects	█	█	█	█
Compost top-dress, aerate & overseed lawns		█	█	█



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