

## Dwarf Hibiscus Care from BonsaiOutlet.com

### General Background:

The state flower of Hawaii, Tropical Hibiscus are Valued in the garden for their large showy trumpet shaped flowers produced in summer and valued as a bonsai for its upright habit, open, loose branches, light green and lovely flowers which are all easily enhanced with pruning. The Dwarf Hibiscus is ideal for bonsai, with the same gorgeous flowers as its larger cousin, and is easy to grow and care for making it a delightful indoor plant for any bonsai enthusiast from beginning to master levels; simply applying a little bit of care and adapting to its needs, your dwarf hibiscus can successfully be grown in any climate zone.

### Trees Features:

Lil' Kim is unique bonsai with dainty little white hibiscus flowers punctuated with a showy red eye. The plant has thick, dark green leaves and the flowers last for three days instead of the typical one day before falling. Easy maintenance and a hearty summer bloom time ensure that Lil' Kim a bonsai to be enjoyed!

### Temperature:

Though your Dwarf Hibiscus will enjoy summer sunshine, you will need to bring it indoors well before the danger of first frost. Once night temperatures are consistently above 55 to 60 degrees in spring, you can plan to move them back outside.

### Lighting:

Although some types of hibiscus will tolerate partial shade, they are generally sun-loving plants, requiring at least four hours of sun per day, with eight hours being ideal. Be sure to place your bonsai in a southern facing window that receives bright light during the winter months, and offer your plant a sunny location outdoors during the summer. Gradually expose plants outdoors by placing them in a shady or protected spot for a few days and then gradually increase the amount of direct sun they receive daily for about 10 days. After that, you can move them to their permanent summer spot. If you fail to gradually introduce plants to the sun, they will sunburn the same way you would if you sat in the hot sun for eight hours without sunscreen after being indoors all winter. Once

outside, spray down both lower and upper leaf surfaces with the garden hose to remove any indoor dust or bugs to rejuvenate your bonsai

### **Watering:**

Even though all hibiscus love sun, they will not tolerate drought. When growing a Dwarf Hibiscus Bonsai, you must remember to water them frequently, in most cases daily, to ensure that they do not dry out. If your bonsai drops flower buds or start showing yellowing foliage, it is a sign that they are not getting enough water. Be sure that your Lil' Kim Bonsai is planted in well drained soil and avoid letting it get too wet, or too dry. Ample water will ensure abundance of blooms while flooding will lead to root rot. Unlike the summer months, you will need to give them less water while they live inside. Since indoor humidity will have a drying effect on them, misting their leaves at least once a day is recommended to compensate. You can also help humidify them by placing each pot on a humidity tray filled with gravel and water. As the water evaporates from the tray, the humidity will be higher around the plants. Avoid placing potted hibiscus in saucers with standing water as this can cause root rot and leaf drop.

### **Fertilizing:**

Ensuring that your Hibiscus is planted in a soil that contains plenty of quality compost will go far in providing an environment that encourages blooming. Some people use 10-40-10 fertilizers in order to increase quantity of blooms, but while this may seem initially like a good thing, it will eventually cause your bonsai to flower less and less, and will tax the plants health leading to diseases susceptibility; therefore, it is better to use a 7-2-7 fertilizer in the spring and fall or an organic fish emulsion.

### **Pruning / Training:**

Pruning may be done anytime you wish to control the size or shape of your hibiscus bonsai. Keep in mind that when you prune, flower production will stop until the plant has made sufficient new growth. Generally, the farther back you cut the plant, the longer it will take to resume flower production. So it's better to prune back lightly and more frequently than to allow the plant to grow so large that you have to prune it severely. Prune in fall or early spring and keep in mind that hibiscus Bark is quite thin and is easily damaged; as such, it is considered more prudent to shape your bonsai with pruning instead of wire. Prune your hibiscus, using very sharp pruning shears. Make cuts ¼ inch above a leaf bud that is pointing in the direction you want the plant to grow.

Never prune your hibiscus bonsai during the late fall or winter, as it will kill any new growth.

### **Insects / Pests:**

Lil' Kim Dwarf Hibiscus bonsai are susceptible to Aphids, whitefly and Japanese beetles. Diseases include leaf spot, canker and flower blight. A non-chemical way to treat the problem is to take them outside on a warm winter day and hose them off. Or you can put them in your bathtub or shower and spray them well. While this may not completely eliminate pests, it will certainly control them and clean off your plants as well. You can also spray your plant down to runoff with a solution of 1tsp dish soap to 1 quart warm water, taking care to rinse the solution off well with water. This technique is usually quite effective for most pests.

### **Propagation:**

Most tropical plants available at garden centers are common "garden varieties" and were propagated by root cuttings with some varieties being easier than others to root. Perlite in plastic pots is a common way to root hibiscus. A rooting hormone will be needed, and it is very important to make sure the medium never dries out. Put 15 to 20 cuttings in a six-inch pot and be sure to provide warm temperatures, high humidity and adequate light and they should root in six to eight weeks.

### **Repotting:**

With any container plant it is important to make sure they don't overgrow their pots. When you repot your hibiscus bonsai, you will not only want to prune the branches and leaves, but will also want to trim the roots. Be sure to provide an abundance of water and keep your bonsai in a pot that is only a third bigger than the roots in pots because hibiscuses tend to flower better if not allowed too much root space, which is another reason that they do so well as bonsai.

### **Additional Comments:**

Sometimes an otherwise healthy hibiscus will grow well but not produce flowers. Plants that are set out before the temperatures warm up sufficiently will not bloom until temperatures warm. Insufficient light and shortened daylight hours are another cause of poor flowering.

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