Jade Bonsai Care from BonsaiOutlet.com

General Information:

A native of South Africa, the Jade is an easy-care evergreen Bonsai that should never be exposed to temperatures below 50° F. The trunk of the Jade is thick with a dense branch structure. When provided with sufficient sunlight, the elliptic leaves will develop red edges. In the fall, the tree produces beautiful star-shaped white blossoms. Natural leaf size is 1-2" but can be trained to stay as small as 1/2" with regular pruning. The Jade tree is especially suited for informal upright and clump styles in all sizes.

Location:

A great choice for both high and low light conditions, the Jade tree is a great low-maintenance Bonsai choice. The Jade can be placed outdoors in warm temperatures (above 50 degrees F.) but is best grown indoors where it can get plenty of natural sunlight. The shortening days of fall trigger the Jade to produce gorgeous blooms around late September to early October.

Watering:

Striking a balance between not enough water and too much water can be a bit tricky but is very important. The leaves of the Jade tree are unique in that they retain water. Only lightly water the Jade, allowing the soil to dry between watering. In the winter months, only water every 2-3 weeks. Water thoroughly and deeply when it needs water and let it catch its breath before watering again. An old bonsai watering trick is to place the entire pot in a sink of water an inch or two deep and let the water absorb from the holes in the bottom of the pot. Another favorite way to know if it needs watering is to lift it. You can get a sense for whether it needs watering by its weight.

An inexpensive moisture meter takes the guesswork out of watering. We sell them. Water slowly so it absorbs into the dirt, otherwise the water will run all over your table. Mist occasionally with a spray bottle too. It helps take the burden off of the roots especially when it's very hot and dry out. We pot our bonsai trees specifically to drain well, so it's almost impossible to over water.

Misting:

Leaves want humidity to keep them green and healthy. Any time your tree is inside, the air is very dry. Mist often during the day. Avoid putting your Bonsai near a draft or vent, which dries out the foliage. A humidity tray is a great way to increase humidity. These shallow trays filled with small stones have water in the bottom of the tray. Make sure the water does not reach the bottom of the Bonsai pot. As the water evaporates, it creates a moister environment.

Fertilizing:

Fertilizing a Bonsai is essential to its health because the nutrients in the soil leave very quickly with the water. When new growth appears in the spring it's time to start feeding your bonsai. The Jade needs a balanced fertilizer for vigorous growth. Use an organic liquid fertilizer or a chemical fertilizer diluted to one half strength. Fertilize every two weeks during the growing season and once a month in the winter. Jade responds quickly and enthusiastically to fertilizing, don't skip it.

Pruning:

The Jade is a slow growing tree that can take up to 20 years to reach three feet tall. To encourage stronger growth near the bottom, new growth needs to be pinched back. This is one species that does well with trunk reduction. Wounds heal quickly within 1-2 weeks. Make cuts flush not concave, when removing twigs or branches. Deep cuts will leave unwanted scars. Cuts do not need to be sealed. ALLOW THE SOIL TO DRY BEFORE REMOVING HEAVY ROOTS OR BRANCHES.

Wiring:

Good wiring techniques are used to train Bonsai trees into different shapes and styles. Use the thinnest training wire that will hold the branch in the desired position. DO NOT WIRE A BONSAI JUST AFTER REPOTTING. Wind the training wire in the direction the branch is bent in order to keep the wire from loosening. Wrapping the wire too tightly will cause scarring. Wrap just tight enough to get the job done. Begin at the base of the Bonsai tree and slowly wrap the wire around the trunk to anchor. Continue along the branch you wish to train. Repeat the process as needed. Jade respond quickly to wiring, often within 3 weeks. After about 3-6 weeks, the branch should be able to maintain the shape on it's own, and the wire can be removed. Cut the wire carefully from the branch. DO NOT UNWIND WIRES. This could cause the branch to break.

Repotting:

You should repot your Jade every two years in the spring using a basic soil mix. A good rule of thumb for repotting your Jade is if you can remove the root/soil ball in one piece and it's the same shape of the pot, it's time. After repotting, water thoroughly and place Jade in a shady location for several weeks so new roots can grow.

Insects and Diseases:

Insects such as aphids, spider mites, scale, and root aphids are common Bonsai pests. Mealy bugs or root rot often affects indoor Jades. The outdoor-grown Jade is especially susceptible to aphids. These can be attacked with the use of insecticides and fungicides in the form of sprays, soapy rinses, or systemic poisons. Spraying your Bonsai once every month or two with a non-toxic insect spray is recommended. Soaps should be rinsed of the next day. DO NOT SPRAY WHEN SOIL IS DRY.

Mealy bugs look like whitish cottony areas at the leaf base with some infestations appearing mainly on the roots. These infestations can only be seen during repotting. Root rot is caused by fungi that enter the roots through wounded or damaged roots, often due to over or under watering or poorly drained soils. There is no chemical treatment for this disease. Remove ALL affected roots and growth, sterilize the tree's pot and repot the plant using fresh soil to avoid re-infecting the Jade.