

## Seasonal Task Schedule for Bonsai - San Diego Area

- > So much bonsai growing information is generalized for all of California and sometimes beyond. This calendar is not a growing guide but does contain some basic tips for many of the trees we grow.
- > This calendar was created to cater to San Diego County. **Calendars are only for general guidance, not specific timing.**
- > Some species are too difficult to grow in San Diego area so they are not included on the calendar, and some species will be added later as they are needed.
- > The actual weather, your water quality and your growing methods will influence your actual practices timing of activities. Most of San Diego County has fairly mild weather so growing conditions are different from central and northern California and even parts of the LA area. Our trees will start to grow earlier in the season and go dormant later in the year. In some cases, dormancy does not happen timely.
- > Many of our water sources are very alkaline with lots of minerals, and this is increasing as the drought continues. This makes growing a quality plant too difficult to do for some species, so these are not included in this calendar. Using rain water, de-ionized water or reverse osmosis systems can greatly help. Confirm water quality with your local water agency.
- > Become knowledgeable of the micro-climates in your growing area. There are significant differences between member's growing areas and differences with in your own yard.
- > **Very Important....only do significant work on healthy trees.** Sometimes work needs to be postponed until a tree is healthy. This will affect your calendar of work.
- > This is a "living" document which will be edited as needed when new information or species are available to reflect current practice.

	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	
<b>Conifers</b>													
Japanese Black Pine <sup>3</sup>	Repot	Fertilize							Fertilize				
	Prune, bend,wire					Pull Needles					Prune, thin, wire		
	Graft					Decandle <sup>2</sup>					Bud selection, Needle pull		
> Fertilizing may need to start mid-February if winter weather is mild, which may stimulate the tree to start growing sooner than normal. The purpose of pulling needles is one of energy balancing.													
Junipers (shimpaku, nanas, prostrata, San Jose) <sup>3</sup>	Repot								Fertilize				
	Prune, bend,wire					Trim and small branch wiring						Prune, bend and wire	
	Graft												
Juniper, foemina <sup>3</sup>	Prune, thin, wire		Fertilize (fertilizing less than other juniper species. Too much will cause too much growth)								Repot		
	Repot		Trimming is done frequently during periods of growth since this is a fast growing juniper								Prune, thin, wire		
	Graft										Heavy pruning & bending		
Juniper California, Sierra <sup>3</sup>	Prune, bend, wire											Prune, bend, wire	
	Repot <sup>4</sup>					Trim, fine wiring							
	Graft												
Cypress (Monterey, Tecate) <sup>3</sup>	Repot <sup>2</sup>		Fertilize								Repot		
	Prune, thin, wire					Trim, wire						Trim	
											Heavy pruning & bending		
Cypress, Bald <sup>3</sup>	Repot		Fertilize										
	Prune, trim, wire		Trim, fine wiring <sup>2</sup>										

1. Repot junipers only when necessary, not on a schedule. Junipers should not be heavily pruned (including new wiring) If repotting is not needed, improve the water percolation of the surface by replacing the top layer of hard soil with fresh soil. Ask about this technique. It will save you time, money and help the tree. A juniper should not be heavily pruned (including new wiring) prior to a repot. The foliage should be robust and free of disease. A juniper stores the energy it uses to regrow roots in its foliage. After a repot the same holds true, no wiring or trimming until all the foliage has grown robustly for a few months. This is especially true for California junipers.
  2. De-candle June for larger or slower growing trees, July for smaller or faster growing trees
  3. Faster growing trees may require an additional trimming and wiring, and possible delay fertilizing in the spring to avoid too much stretched growth. Repot like deciduous tree., when buds swell and show green
  4. For collected trees it is not recommended to re-pot, cut, major bend and wire in the same calendar year. This may be 2-3 years after digging.
- > Avoid any wiring of branches >1/4" March through July.
- Important Note:** Junipers should not be pinched constantly to maintain their shape. Occasionally is ok. About 10 years ago many of the best practitioners figured out that this is very detrimental. Here is a link to the blog by Michael Hagedorn, Crataegus Bonsai, explaining the situation. <https://crataegus.com/2012/08/26/how-to-pinch-junipers/>

	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
<b>Broadleaf Evergreens</b>												
Boxwoods: Japanese, Dwarf and Harland's, Texas Privet, Pyracanthas (varieties)			Lite Fertilize	Fertilize								
	Prune, thin, wire										Thin, wire	
	Repot						Full or partial defoliation, hard prune					
Oaks: Coast Live Oak, Cork Oak			Fertilize									
	Prune, trim, wire										Prune, wire	
	Repot <sup>2</sup>				Partial defoliation							Repot
	Trimming as needed											

> Boxwood wood is very hard/brittle, so it is good for jin and shari. But, the hardness develops after only 2-3 years or so on any given branch. Be very careful when bending the small twigs that have started to turn light green and young branches that have started to develop bark. Suggest that when bending also rotate the branch slightly while bending. Helps reduce the chances of breaking the brittle wood.

2. The best time for re-potting **Oaks** in SD is when the buds turn reddish in early spring or also when it is dormant.

> Defoliation or partial defoliation is a very good technique for leaf size reduction, internode length reduction and balancing the growth of oaks and evergreen trees/shrubs. These techniques do weaken a tree due to leaf area reduction, less food production. The tree must be fully re-leafed and hardened off before doing any additional work. **These techniques should only be done on healthy trees.** Defoliation can be done to varying degrees on a branch or area of a tree, and does not need to be done on all branches. Branches left alone will continue to grow more strongly...good for increasing branch diameter and vigor. **Ask about defoliation before starting.**

> Wiring can be done on Oaks but carefully. Oaks do not always like to be wired. Cut and grow is best for oaks since they grow somewhat angularly anyway.

> Comprehensive video on oak care and styling: Oak Video by Al Nelson: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0LioMMw5Rj8>> will help you with scheduling work.

Silverberry varieties, Yaupon Holly Cotoneaster				Fertilize									
	Prune, trim, wire			trim as needed and, finer wiring							Trim, wire		
	Re-pot			Partial defoliation, air layering									
Olive, European				Fertilize									
				Re-pot						Cut, thin, wire			
	Wire			Defoliation, all/partial									
	Air Layer, cuttings												

> Broadleaf evergreens can be defoliated when new growth has hardened off, when the leaves are stiff and leathery and the tree has pretty much stopped growing. Tree needs time to re-grow foliage and harden off before late October/early November. Leaf size reduction is significant. Partial defoliation is preferred instead of a complete defoliation. Ask about this technique.

> Olive branches can easily be broken when young. Handle carefully and support with fingers at the base of the branch to be bent when wiring. Put on your calendar to check the wire for cutting in because olive branches can grow very fast and thicken quickly.

	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
<b>Deciduous</b>												
Japanese Maple: <i>Acer palmatum</i>					Fertilize				Fertilize lightly, Low N			
	Prune, wire		Pinch new growth		Trim, defoliation-all/partial					Prune, trim, wire		
	Re-pot <sup>1</sup>				Air layer							
Trident Maple: <i>Acer buergerianum</i>	Prune, trim, wire			Trim long shoots and remove large leaves						Fertilize lightly, Low N		Cut back, wire
	Re-pot			Defoliation, all/partial								
				Air Layer								
Elm: Chinese and other cultivars, Japanese Zelkova			Fertilize, see notes									
	Cut, wire			Trim, fine wire only							Cut, thin, wire	
	Re-pot		Pinch new growth									
	Air layer			Air layer, partial defoliation								

> Elms, Hornbeams, Zelkovas start to grow earlier due to milder winters. Chinese elms rarely lose all of their leaves in the fall/winter. Expect to manually defoliate them to clear the way for fine trimming to create good ramification.

Pomegranate: <i>punica granatum</i>		Repot										
		Fertilize					Fertilize			Fertilize		Wire, prune, trim
	Wire, prune, trim				Cuttings, air Layer							

> If tree is in development, fertilize more often to keep growth strong. If the tree is in refinement, then do not fertilize in the spring like other deciduous trees to avoid excessive growth. Do light fertilizing if the tree needs a bit more or wait until summer for first application. Trimming can also be done as late of Spring through Fall. Cuttings and air-layering timing as above, look for when the plant has hardened off or nearly hardened off. Avoid trimming after May or so to avoid cutting off flowering/fruitlet buds for those types. Light wiring of small twigs and branches can be done during the year. Directional pruning also works well. Pomegranates can get a disease that curls the leaves. If your trees do have the curl you have to spray with Lime-sulfur when it is dormant, before bud swell. December-January is a good time. If we have a long warm spell in December or January, then buds may start growing too early so you may have to spray earlier than usual. If buds start to swell and you have not yet sprayed, do so at once.

Crepe (Crape) Myrtle: <i>Lagerstroemia indica</i>		Repot	Fertilize				Fertilize		Fertilize with lower N			
	Wire, Prune, Trim				Cuttings, air-layer							Wire

Note: Trimming after May can remove flowering wood. Light wiring of small twigs and branches can be done during the year. Caution...even small twigs and branches can be brittle especially if hardened. Directional pruning also works well. Cuttings or Air-layers should be done when the plant has hardened or nearly hardened off. Older types are susceptible to mildew. Use dormant spray when leaves are almost dropped, then again at bud swell. Dormant spray helps but does not stop mildew on Crepes. At first sign, usually early summer, use copper sprays. Keep an eye on the leaves and flower buds. Newer varieties named after native American Indian peoples and other new varieties are very resistant. If a tree is in development, then fertilize more often to keep growth strong. If the tree is in refinement, then do not fertilize in the spring as with other deciduous trees to avoid excess growth. Do light fertilizing if the tree needs a bit more or wait until summer for the first application.

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<b>Deciduous (Cont'd.)</b>												
Liquidambar: American Sweetgum: styraciflua, Oriental Sweetgum: orientalis	Repot				Air layer, cuttings							
	Graft				Defoliation, all/partial							
	Wire, prune, trim	Fertilize									Fertilize lightly, Low N	
		Trim as needed to control growth and silhouette, fine wiring small branches is OK										
Ginkgo biloba: maidenhair tree	Repot				Prune							
	Wire				Fertilize after pruning in spring/early summer							

> Little or no fertilizer in the spring will help keep internodes shorter on new growth.

> Ginkgo has different growth characteristics than most deciduous trees. Bonsai Mirai has two very good videos.

Quince: Chaenomeles				Pruning new growth when 2-4 leaves have hardened is best, that is when internodes are shorter								
	Repot <sup>1</sup>			Cuttings: semi-hardwood <sup>2</sup>	Partial Defoliation			Repot <sup>1</sup>				
	All year, remove flowers whenever you see them fade. Also remove fruit at once.											
		Fertilize										
	Wire, prune, trim <sup>3</sup>				Prune long branches as needed							

> Defoliation or partial defoliation is done in the summer months when the tree is not rapidly growing like in the spring. The tree has stored the energy it will need to grow new leaves. Partial defoliation is a very good technique for leaf size reduction and internode length reduction. It is also very good for balancing the energy distribution amongst tree branches because partial defoliation can be done to varying degrees on a branch or area of a tree, and does not need to be done on all branches. Branches left alone will continue to grow more strongly good for increasing diameter or vigor. Ask for help on this important technique or post questions on the SDBC Facebook page.

\* Winter re-potting of Quince is fine, but new information from bonsai professionals shows fall to be better. If you are along the coast mid-September may be fine. If inland then mid October is better. This gives the plants time to regrow roots before it gets too cold. If heat is an issue after re-potting, then place tree in bright shade with protection from wind.

\*\*Stem cuttings from base with any root or callous will most likely root when taken in Spring- early Summer. Air-layering and grafting are difficult to get good results.

\*\*\*Prune new growth back to 2-4 buds. For more info on Quince: Bonsai Mirai has good videos and covers a few of the unique growth characteristic, Bonsai Tonight and Crataegus Bonsai also have several blog posts.

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<b>Deciduous (Cont'd.)</b>												
Ume Apricot, Prunus mume, (Japanese Flowering Plum)				Fertilize						Fertilize lightly, Low N		
					Trim, wire, when leaves harden <sup>2</sup>							
	Re-pot <sup>1</sup>				Air layer							
Azaleas Southern Indicas, Belgian Indicas, Kurume				Balanced fertilize for growth				Fertilize for flower buds, low N				
	Wire young branches, pruning				Trimming, pinching							
	Repot											

> It is necessary to remove flowers as they fade out/wilt some plants will not put energy into the seeds.

> Azalea branches are very brittle after 1-2 years. It is best to wire movement into young branches and then cut back to the desired length.

Azaleas, Satsuki					Fertilize for growth			Fertilize for flower buds				
					Trim, wire <sup>2</sup>							
	Re-pot <sup>1</sup>				Repot, timing varies by variety at this time of the year.							
	Air layer				Air layer							
Wisteria				Fertilize, iron supplement is good in summer						Fertilize low nitrogen		
	Prune		Remove dead flowers/pods		Trim shoots to 3-5 buds to > ramification,							Trim ends to 2-3 buds
	Repot				Air layer	Partial defoliation						

> It is good practice to remove Azalea flowers and ovaries as the flowers start to fade out/wilt. This will help the remaining flowers and help the energy of the plant.

Azaleas are pruned after blooming. Not all flowers may be spent by the time the plant starts to grow. It is OK to start the pruning process and save the last flowers, but it is better to just remove all of Satsuki Azaleas are acid loving and more sensitive to our high pH water. Best to use about 100% Kanuma or 90% kanuma+10% peat for potting species like Satsuki. Other stronger species are better suited to be planted in Kanuma, pumice, peat/bark (acid planter mix) at 2:1:1 ratio or what works for you.

Azalea branches are very brittle after 1-2 years. It is best to wire movement into young branches and then cut back to the desired length.

Wisteria pruning caution: Do not cut flush when pruning branches because they do not have a shoulder to cut back to. Leave some excess and cut back later when there is no more sign of die-back.

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<b>Sub-tropical and Tropical</b>												
Bougainvillea				Fertilize								
				Prune, trim. Remove old flowers and flower stems as needed most of the year								
				Repot, field dig, defoliation								
				Primetime for airtlayer, cuttings								

> Branches are very brittle and very difficult to wire. Wiring is best done on younger growth BUT bark on young growth is soft and not hardened. Use larger diameter wire than usual of aluminum wire. Cut and grow is best way to guide growth.

> Major work like pruning and repotting is best done in the warmest months **June- September**. Wounds and roots will recover the fastest in warm weather. Light trimming is OK most of the year.

Ficus				Fertilize								
				Prune, trim, wire								
				Repot, field dig, defoliation								
				Best time airtlayer, cuttings, grafting, large cuts								

> Wire will cut into all Ficus **quickly** because the bark is thin/soft and the branches constantly increase in girth during and after lots of growth when trees are being pushed to develop in the warmer months.

> Check the wire weekly about 3 weeks after applying. Minor wire indents will fill in over time but deep indents may not or may take many years. Wire scars are undesirable on ficus

> Removing wire is best done by cutting off, particularly diameters >2 mm. Aluminum wire is best since it is smooth and easier to apply. Ficus bark is thin and soft so use larger than usual wire diameter  
 > Major work like pruning branches >1/4" and repotting are best done in the warmest months June-September. Wounds and roots recover the fastest in warm weather. Light trimming is OK most of the year.

> Work can be done out of prime time using a greenhouse or cold protection of some type. Bottom heat mats work great for cuttings, removed air layers, defoliation and repots. Otherwise recovery is longer.

> Allow about 6-8 weeks of good growing time for cuttings/layers/repots/defoliation to become well established with a strong root system before the weather cools too much.

There are many resources available to answer questions on growing bonsai. **Questions can be posed by emailing the SDBC web site, by posting questions/comments on the SDBC Facebook page, asking any of our experienced members at the monthly meeting, bring your tree to a monthly meeting for advice and checking the list of instructors on the SDBC web site.** Also, exploring web sites like Bonsai Tonight (Jonas DuPuich), Bonsaify and Phutu blog and many youtube videos (Eric Schrader), Bonsai Mirai (Ryan Neil), YouTube (videos are much improved), Eisei En (Bjorn Bjorholm), International Bonsai (Bill Valavanis), Eastern Leaf (Jason Chen). There are more resources but these are a good place to start.

This table has been a 3+ year project by **Charlie Mosse** and **Susan Ronan** and brought to you by the **San Diego Bonsai Club**.