



midway bonsai society

COLLECTING SUITABLE MATERIAL FOR BONSAI

A. Collecting etiquette

This requires that only those items which are to be removed be dug, that holes be filled in, that no rubbish be left behind, that any gates opened are closed, and that no structures or remaining plants be damaged.

- When entering an area do not start digging immediately. Instead locate and tag plant material which appears to have bonsai potential.
- Decide on how many plants can reasonably be cared for and then select the tagged items which will be collected.
- Make sure the tree is alive. If dormant, scratch a twig to see if there is green cambium below. d. Dig surface soil away and check for satisfactory surface roots.
- Evaluate the taper and trunk diameter.
- After removing a plant fill in the hole with soil and with any branches and foliage which had been removed.
- Before leaving the area, remove the tags from plants which were tagged but not dug.

B. Method of digging

- After selecting a plant for collection it is important to establish a new balance between the amount of foliage and the amount of roots remaining after digging. This is done by removing all branches which will not be needed, shortening the height of the tree where appropriate, and removing much of the remaining foliage.
- Around the trunk outline a circle in the soil which has a diameter less than the diameter of the intended container.
- With a sharp shovel or spade, make vertical incisions, cutting the soil and roots below this circle to a depth equal to the length of the tool's blade. Should the soil be hard a Mattock or Pick can be used. Dig to a depth of 300 mm and then cut towards the tap root. When the tap root is exposed you can cut it or snap it to be able to remove the root ball. Assistance in digging is always most welcome. Use a pruning saw or lopping shears to cut heavy roots. A lifting bar would also not go amiss.
- If time and circumstances permit, defer removal of the material from the ground and leave it in place for collection later. This gives the plant the opportunity to grow new feeder roots and to begin recovering from this initial shock while still retaining its downward growing roots.
- If the material is to be removed, dig a trench just outside the root ball and tunnel into the root ball. Under the root ball cut the downward growing roots. Continue until its root ball is free to be lifted from the hole.
- Keep as much of the root ball (roots and soil) intact as possible. If all of the soil falls off the roots, put some in a container to use when potting the plant.
- Wrap the root ball in sheet plastic, a plastic black bag or hessian, tying it securely with twine to help keep the root ball intact.
- After the collected plant has been moved to the transportation, moisten the root ball to keep it from drying out.



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C. Post collection care and cultivation

1. The collected material may need a second pruning after arriving in the work area.
 - The length of the roots and branches to remain is determined by the shape of the tree and the dimensions of the training pot.
 - The length of the major roots should be slightly shorter than the dimensions of the bonsai container into which they will ultimately be planted.
 - The tree is then planted in a nursery container or in a nursery bed. It will rarely be planted directly into a bonsai container. Tie the plant securely in its container to prevent it shifting.
2. The first watering should be thorough and an anti shock solution such as Superthrive®, Dispirin, Vitamin B12 (Brewers Yeast), Kickstart and or Willow water should be used.
 - Plants having tall trunks can be wrapped with Hessian or Rope to reduce moisture evaporation. As the weather gets warmer they should be sprayed with water every morning and evening so that the covering remains moist while the soil is not too wet. An intermittent mist system if available will help to prevent dehydration.
 - Collected trees need to be protected from sun, wind and extremes of temperature for two to four weeks, or until they appear to no longer be stressed.
3. Intensive care needs to continue after the plant begins sprouting.
 - Sprouts may be a result of food stored in the plant rather than as a result of nutrients currently being manufactured by the plant.
 - Excessive new growth should be removed to prevent weakening the plant and to channel existing nutrients into those growth points which are to be retained.
 - Protect the plant to prevent the new buds from being scorched by the sun as well as to reduce evaporation of moisture from the leaves.
 - After a month gradually reduce the time spent under shade.
4. In about six weeks as the plant appears to be recovering, begin applying small quantities of diluted fertilizer to stimulate leaf, branch and root growth.
5. If additional root reduction is necessary, wait a minimum of one year and preferably two before making any drastic cuts on the roots.

D. Personal items that should be taken with you.

- Suitable clothing for protection against the elements.
- Sun Screen
- Gloves for hand protection.
- Plasters for blisters
- Eye drops in case of grit or dust ending up in your eyes.
- Clean drinking water for drinking, washing hands, injuries and plants.
- First Aid Kit
- Toilet paper or tissues
- Refreshments including energy boosting items.