

Surinam Cherry Care

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General Background:

The Surinam Cherry is native to tropical America. Known as Pitanga throughout Brazil, it is naturally a large shrub or small tree with a conical form, growing slowly to 8 meters in height. The Surinam Cherry is often used in gardens as a hedge or screen in the southern U.S. The fruit is high in Vitamin C, and its predominant food use is as a flavoring and base for jams and jellies. The attractive foliage, flowers, and berries help make Eugenia a popular landscape choice in warm climate areas, such as California, Florida, and Hawaii and are also reasons for its popularity as a Bonsai.

Trees Features:

The Surinam Cherry is a sub-tropical evergreen featuring striking red flaking bark, with small, glossy, firm, dark green ovate leaves formed in pairs. New leaves will be copper colored. In spring, it may bear small, fragrant, white flowers followed by red, edible fruit that are up to 2 cm in diameter. The taste of the Surinam Cherry ranges from sweet to sour; depending on the level of ripeness (the darker red to black range is quite sweet, while the green to orange range is strikingly tart).

Temperature:

The Surinam Cherry can be successfully be grown indoors as well. In summer, Eugenia likes the heat, while it prefers winter temperatures between 46-68F. It needs to be indoors in winter temps drop below 30 degrees. Eugenia does not like draughts or a lot of variation in temperature and will drop its leaves under such conditions.

Lighting:

Place your Surinam Cherry in Full sun to part shade. This Bonsai appreciates a bright position, but can tolerate lower light conditions if necessary. If placed outdoors in summer, it can usually tolerate full sun, although partial shade is recommended in the hottest areas.

Watering:

Water your Surinam Cherry generously in summer, and less in winter. This Bonsai does not like variations in watering, preferring consistently slight moisture to being soaked and allowed to dry out as it will tend to drop leaves if the soil dries. Eugenia needs humidity, so misting and keeping your Bonsai on a humidity tray can be beneficial; to do this, keep your Bonsai pots elevated on pebbles ensuring that the roots do not sit in water which will prevent root rot while offering increased humidity. Use distilled/rain water if your water is hard, as Eugenia does not tolerate salt.

Fertilizing:

Fertilize your Surinam Cherry Every 2 weeks during heavy growth and every 4-5 in winter. This Bonsai likes a slightly acid soil, so the occasional use of Mir-acid is recommended.

Pruning / Training:

The Surinam Cherry grows up to 8 meters in the wild and is a vigorous grower. For this reason, it Can and should be pruned back hard, offering the beginning Bonsai grower opportunities to practice their craft. Shorten new shoots with 6-8 pairs of leaves to 1-2 pairs. This Bonsai can be carefully wired during the growing season on its lignified branches, but better shaping results will be achieved with simple pruning. If wiring is preferred, be sure to protect the branches, as they scar easily. It is suitable for all styles, which allows for creativity and individuality to shine.

Insects / Pests:

The Surinam Cherry is prone to Scale, mealy bug, Caribbean fruit fly, aphids, and red spider. An effective remedy to take control of many insect pests is to make a diluted soap and water solution. Spray the leaves until the solution runs off, gently wipe leaves with a soft sponge, rinsing after each pass to ensure aphid removal. Take a final rinse with pure water and keep your eyes peeled in the days following for further attacks! Mealy Bugs are white and found in masses along the leaves where they tend to hide themselves along protected areas of the plant. A good home remedy for dealing with mealy bugs is wipe them off by hand and spray your Bonsai with Neem Oil. No diseases are of major concern, but it may drop leaves if watering is inconsistent. Keep in mind that the Surinam Cherry is not salt or chlorine tolerant.

Propagation:

Propagate with cuttings in summer or seeds in fall. Ripe cuttings should be collected with a sharp pair of scissors.

Repotting:

Repot your Surinam Cherry every two years in early to mid-spring. Bottom heat will encourage root growth. Use a basic bonsai soil, or an acid mix like azalea soil. The Surinam Cherry will withstand vigorous root pruning.