

Desert rose (*Adenium obesum*)

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The Desert Rose is a small succulent tree native to Africa and Arabia which has fleshy leaves and develops a bulbous base. It produces large pink and white or red flowers when it gets enough sunlight.

The Desert Rose is popular as an ornamental plant but not often seen as a bonsai. It is vigorous and healthy under the right conditions and with proper care. The Desert Rose Bonsai adapts easily to growing in a pot, what makes it well suited for bonsai. During winter time the plant will drop its leaves except in special tropical climates. The milk sap of the Desert Rose is poisonous.

Specific Bonsai care guidelines for the Desert Rose

Position: In a warm climate, the Desert Rose can be kept outside year round. In temperate climates, it can be placed outside in a sunny position or in semi-shade from May to September. From autumn until spring the tree needs a warm place in the house or greenhouse with a lot of light. The temperature should not fall below 5° C / 40° F. In most cases the Desert Rose will drop its leaves in winter.

Watering: The Desert Rose needs to be watered only every 7 to 10 days.

Feeding: Use liquid fertilizer at half the recommended strength once a month from spring to autumn.

Pruning and wiring: You can prune the *Adenium* Bonsai year-round. Flowers appear on new shoots, so time pruning well. Pruning stimulates more ramification and, as a result, more flower buds to develop. Trim back long shoots and cut off damaged parts, making clean cuts just above a leaf node or junction. To avoid the poisonous milk sap you better wear gloves when you work on the plant! When you wire the branches do not wind the wire too tightly so the branches can grow thicker without wire marks being left on them.

Repotting: Repot every two or three years in spring with root-pruning. A well-draining soil mix is needed as excess wetness is a sure way to kill the Desert Rose.

Propagation: The Desert Rose tree can be propagated from seeds and cuttings.

Pests and diseases: Aphids, mealybugs and spider mites may attack Desert Roses which are weakened by poor conditions. Good care will prevent most infestations.