

Bonsai Powder Puff

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General Background:

The Powder puff is native to the tropics of America and Asia as well as being found along the Mediterranean and in Europe. In the landscape they are primarily grown for their showy inflorescence. This Bonsai is an easy to grow plant that will flower year round. It is perfect for beginners as it is drought tolerant and resistant to diseases and pests.

Tree Features:

The Powder Puff is a small, mimosa like evergreen shrub featuring pinnate leaves and decorative white or red flowers. Bright splashes of color and an exuberant flower form held by a slender trunk make Powder Puff a great choice for Bonsai. With gorgeous raspberry buds the Powder Puff Bonsai promises to be a colorful addition to your home year round. Delicate Crimson `puffs` decorate this tree over long blooming periods and are beautifully framed by slim compound oval leaves that close up at night and they have a bronze tint when first developing. The flowers are very small, however the brightly colored stamens make them appear larger; the length of the stamens varies from species to species. The Calliandra flower "buds" look like a cluster of small berries.

Temperature:

The Powder Puff is typically an indoor Bonsai, and as such, prefers consistent warmth. If outdoor temperatures permit it to be outside, it will enjoy bright light with protection from midday sun to prevent burning of leaves. The leaves may also respond to movement from one place to another, cold weather and even a windy day. If they actually wilt, it is usually a warning that it needs water.

Lighting:

Your Powder Puff will do well in a sunny location, preferably in a southern facing window site. When kept in bright/hot sun, the leaves tend to stay small without any need to persuade them to do so.

Watering:

Keep the soil of your Bonsai evenly moist, in well drained, airy, low water-retention soil. Give a little extra water if the temperatures are fairly high. Test the soil with your finger to ensure that the soil is not too wet or too dry. Powder Puff Bonsai need humidity, so misting and keeping your Bonsai on a humidity tray will 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

Fertilizing:

During the growing season, a regular weekly feeding program with a balanced liquid fertilizer (once a month during cooler weather) will keep your Powder Puff nourished. Occasional leaf yellowing can be easily resolved with an iron supplement.

Pruning / Training:

As a young tree, the slender trunk can be bent and shaped easily, and it is very important to make sure to only wire soft branches in the spring and summer seasons. Older trees are more difficult to bend and are usually styled as upright bonsai. Most species have flexible branches and take well to wiring. New foliage appears on old wood, therefore severe pruning works well. Frequent foliage trimming, any time of year, encourages more compact foliage. A full canopy style may display the flowers to their best advantage. If you start with a flexible enough trunk, cascading showers of vibrant color are possible. If you want to encourage the development of size quicker, be sure to pick off the flowers before they develop fully. This practice will save 'energy' in the plant for growth, so that it will not try to make 'fruit'.

Insects / Pests:

When Powder puff Bonsai are kept outdoors they are susceptible to very few pests and/or diseases. Watch for the common greenhouse (indoor) pests such as aphids, scale and mites. With good air circulation pests are limited to occasional aphids and infrequent scale. Aphids may be the most likely nuisance. 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!

Propagation:

Powder Puff Bonsai are most often commercially propagated from seed; they may also be grown from cuttings and air layers.

Repotting:

The best seasons for potting and repotting the Powder Puff Bonsai are spring and summer. In warm climates, success can be had when repotting year round. Check the roots annually to ensure that they are not becoming root bound; trim roots as needed keeping in mind that severe root pruning may cause leaf drop.