

Tree Profile: Bougainvillea Glabra (Paper Flower)

General Information: Bougainvillea is a native of South America and named after a French navigator. It is a member of the Nyctaginaceae family and is an evergreen vine which is just as happy spreading horizontally or hanging downwards as it is climbing upwards, it makes itself at home in almost any situation. Its trunk tends to be gnarled and is ideal for bonsai.

They flower most heavily in winter and early spring, but some plants put forth scattered clusters all year. Bougainvilleas are available in a variety of species and colors of purple, lavender, carmine, red, scarlet, pink, orange, yellow and white are found. The true flower is white, trumpet shaped and almost unnoticeable within the bracts. The colorful, papery "blooms" are not flowers; they are bracts.

Lighting & Temperature: Full sun. They must be frost protected. They can usually tolerate die back from a freeze, but will withhold blooms for a while.

Watering: Sparse to light watering except when in flower and good drainage!

Feeding: Fertilize the Bougainvillea bonsai a lot(!) - every ten to fourteen days is a real necessity for a healthy plant. Forcing them to flower is to withhold water to a point of causing severe stress to the plant. Plants flower best when given high nitrogen fertilizers and short day lengths (15 hours of darkness within every 24 hour period).

Pruning and wiring: The bougainvillea takes well to pruning and generally blooms on new growth, each branch, as blooms begin to fade, should be cut back to a point somewhat shorter than the desired length. Seal all cuts to prevent rot! If rot is detected on a collected specimen, cut it out completely.

Propagation: Bougainvillea may be grown from air layers, root cuttings and branch cuttings. Young shoots, a few inches in length, should be placed in sandy soil with bottom heat and moisture. Half-ripened or old wood cuttings in six to twelve inch lengths may be rooted in spring.

Repotting: Repot in spring with Screened Bonsai Soil for better drainage. Do not prune the roots too severely.

Pests and Diseases: Caterpillars, aphids, scale, greenfly and mineral deficiencies (chlorosis). Care must be taken that fungus does not invade the tree; reduced humidity and a preventive spraying of fungicide will help greatly.

Species used for bonsai:

- Bougainvillea glabra: paper flower - the most common species used for bonsai. It has shiny green, slightly hairy leaves and magenta colored bracts.
- Bougainvillea brazilinensis: 'Pink Pixie' bougainvillea.
- Bougainvillea buttiana 'Golden Glow' - Has bright yellow bracts which fade to apricot.
- Bougainvillea buttiana 'Louis Wathen' - orange bracts.
- Bougainvillea buttiana 'Mrs. Butt' - crimson bracts.
- Bougainvillea buttiana 'Orange King'.
- Bougainvillea glabra 'Magnifica' - rose pink bracts.
- Bougainvillea glabra 'Snow White' - white bracts.
- Bougainvillea peruviana - rosy pink bracts.



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