

Tree Profile: *Cotoneaster*

General information: *Cotoneaster* is a genus of flowering plants in the Rosaceae family and depending on the definition, of up to 300 species. It's native to temperate Asia, Europe and North Africa, with a strong concentration of diversity in the genus in the mountains of southwestern China and the Himalayas. They are related to hawthorns (*Crataegus*), photinias (*Photinia*), rowans (*Sorbus*) and firethorns (*Pyracantha*) but without thorns.

There're many varieties, but the *Cotoneaster horizontalis* is the most popular species for bonsai. It's cultivated for its flat, symmetrical sprays of glossy green deciduous or semi deciduous leaves (depending on season and location) and masses of bright red berries from autumn through to winter. Its flowers appear in summer, and can range from pink to white.

Position: Full sun to partial shade in summer - airy for best growth, not to be exposed to temperatures below -5°C, protect from frost!

Watering: Moderate, they are more heat and drought tolerant relative to other species. Don't let them dry out, but don't over water either - they don't like wet feet!

Feeding: Fertilize every two weeks with high nitrogen in spring, balanced feed in summer and low nitrogen in autumn. They don't respond too well to heavy fertilising!

Repotting: Annually in early spring in free draining mix. Up to one third of roots can be removed - do not bare-root!

Pruning: *Cotoneaster* responds well to heavy pruning and will bud back on old wood. It constantly generates suckers, which is o.k. if clump style is intended - otherwise remove promptly to get trunk development! For best result grow in the ground - very slow growing in pot. Cut new shoots to one or two leaves during growing season!

Wiring: Wire only when needed in late winter or early spring before bud breaking - it takes well to wiring, but watch the bark!

Propagation: From seed collected in autumn and sown in early spring, air layer in spring. Root and softwood cuttings in summer, but also from suckers by division.

Pests and diseases: Aphids, spider mites, lacebugs and scales. Leaf blight, crown-gall and fireblight.

Styles: Cascade, semi-cascade, slanting, clump, multi-trunked, exposed root and root-over-rock. Perfect for Shohin and Mame!

Some species suitable for bonsai:

Cotoneaster horizontalis* /Rockspray *Cotoneaster, spreading deciduous shrub with herringbone pattern branches. Rounded to elliptic, glossy dark green leaves turning red in autumn. Pink-tinged white flowers in late-spring in pairs.

Cotoneaster dammeri* / Bearberry *cotoneaster, fast-growing evergreen low shrub with creeping branches and small, dark green, elliptical glossy leaves. Small dull red berries persist into winter. Great for cascade and semi-cascade styles.

***Cotoneaster microphylla* (*C. integrifolius*)**, stiffly branched, compact evergreen shrub with ovate dark green leaves and solitary white flowers in summer followed by red/pink fruit.

***Cotoneaster congesta* (*congestus*)**, Very small Pyrenees *cotoneaster* with dull bluish-green leaves- an evergreen shrub with white flowers and red fruit - very good for mame.

Cotoneaster glaucophyllus* /Large-leaf *cotoneaster, a large evergreen upright shrub growing to 3m tall that has escaped from gardens and is considered a weed in Australia. Larger leaves. Can often be found self-sown in gardens.

Cotoneaster divaricatus is an upright form of *cotoneaster* that works well as a hedge.



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