

Tree Profile: *Gardenia - Gardenieae jasminoides 'Radicans'*

General: According to Wikipedia - *Gardenia jasminoides* is an evergreen flowering plant of the family Rubiaceae. A genus of 142 species and native to the tropical and subtropical regions of Africa, southern Asia, Australasia and Oceania. One of our finest evergreen shrubs with strong fragrant white or cream colored flowers in various shapes/sizes and glossy dark green leaves. It's also one of the most challenging plants in the bonsai world. With the dwarf variety 'Radicans' being the most favored one.

Lighting: Partial shade - morning sun to full sun, but no strong direct sunlight.

Watering: Do not allow to dry out and remain dry. A pebble tray in summer will provide the required moisture. Prefers moist soil!

Feeding: Every 3 weeks, spring-autumn and once a month in winter. Use a fertilizer for acid-loving plants, at half strength. Do not fertilize while the plant is in bloom!

Wiring and Pruning: Wire from late winter to autumn, taking care to protect the delicate bark and branches. Do not wire while the plant is setting buds, wire only woody shoots. Young plants should be pruned after the shoots have developed 4-6 leaves, trimming back to 2-3 to establish branching. Pruning of an established bonsai is best done following flowering, every two years only once and then allowing new shoots to set buds. Never prune more than one-third of the plant!

Repotting: Every 2 years in late winter or spring, following blooming. Well drained soil high in organic matter. The roots are superficial and fine, so drastic root pruning is not recommended, and it is best if only 10% of the roots are removed. Use the same mix as for Azalea.

Propagation: Cuttings with wood 6 - 8 weeks old, with 2 or 3 sets of leaves. Cuttings may be taken any time of the year, but summer is best, they even root in a glass of water. Grafting and some cultivars by seeds.

Pests and diseases: Stem canker - distinguished by rough cracked areas that form cankerous growths near the soil line - destroy the plant. Sooty mold, aphids, scales, mealybugs and whiteflies, cottony cushion, spider mites, nematodes - use specific pesticides. Chlorosis (yellow leaves) which is a magnesium and or iron deficiency. It can be cured with a balanced fertilizer! A dose of chelated iron 2-3 times a year as well as some Epsom salt will help there too.

Styles: Informal upright, multi trunk, cascade and semi cascade.

For shohin and mame use the 'radicans' only!

Species suitable for Bonsai:

Gardenia 'radicans', a dwarf variety with very small leaves. The plant is a compact grower, almost a creeping version of the species. The flowers are about 2 - 3cm in diameter, it's the latest of all varieties to flower, but well into the summer.

Outstanding variety for bonsai

Two other species which are very popular for growing as bonsai trees are:

Gardenia 'jasminoides', the flowers are about 3 - 5cm in diameter.

Gardenia 'thunbergia', the flowers are about 5 - 7cm in diameter - more suitable for larger bonsai.



Picture right courtesy of: <http://www.chinesebonsaigarden.com>

Kudos, Accolades and Thanks

- To Craig Wilson for providing his excellent advice while supervising the February workshop night.
- To Tien and Bonsai Sensation for hosting our visit during our recent nursery crawl.
- To Alan H. for stepping forward and volunteering to organise and manage our Bonsai Show in June.