

## Tree Profile: Maidenhair Tree - *Ginkgo biloba*

**General:** According to *Wikipedia* the *Ginkgo biloba* is native to China and the only living species in the division Ginkgophyta, all others being extinct. It is found in fossils dating back 270 million years. The *Ginkgo biloba* has been widely cultivated all over the globe and is a deciduous ornamental tree. It was thought to be a conifer, but is now classed by itself. The green fan shaped summer leaves turn to a lovely yellow in autumn.

The tree grows 25 - 35 meters tall, but in China some have grown over 50 meters. They're often used as avenue trees, which are very imposing during summer with their green leaves and in autumn with their golden yellow leaves.

Ginkgos as bonsai are sadly highly underrated and not too common! It is actually a very hardy and quite fascinating tree and should be in more bonsai collections. We enjoy three different varieties in our collection.

**Lighting & Temperature:** Place in full sun to part shade, but just morning sun is o.k. too - protect from frost while young!

**Watering:** Daily if in full sun, but less in winter - they don't like having their roots wet for too long and prefer a well-draining soil.

**Feeding:** Once every two weeks through spring and autumn! Best to use a slow or controlled release type fertilizer like Osmocote at the drip line. You can use liquid fertilizer like Charlie Carp throughout the seasons.

**Repotting:** Early spring before bud break! Should be done annually for young trees, trees over ten years every 2 - 5 years in free draining mix. Only root prune lightly - they don't like heavy root reduction!

**Propagation:** Semi-ripe cuttings in summer, hardwood cuttings in autumn or winter, taken from the current year's growth. Air-layering in spring after the first flush of growth has hardened off.

**Pruning:** New shoots should be pruned back to 2-3 buds while young in the growing season. Scars will not heal easily, avoid large cuts! Shoots grow in clusters of leaves (see picture) - reduce the cluster to 2-3 leaves with the topmost leaf on the outside. Another good time to prune is autumn and early winter - it's easier to improve the shape. Leave short stubs and trim them off after they dried out!

**Wiring:** On young branches only lightly in spring and autumn - protect the delicate bark!

**Pests and diseases:** The Ginkgo is virtually pest-free and tolerates pollution well.

**Styles:** Informal upright, single or multiple trunks, windswept and group plantings.

### Some species variations suitable for bonsai:

*Ginkgo biloba* 'Aurea' - yellow leaves.

*Ginkgo biloba* 'Chichi Icho' - a very desirable cultivar, has smaller leaves and a textured trunk. Some grow very slowly (up to 50 - 100 years) aerial roots looking like breasts.

*Ginkgo biloba* 'Fastigiata' - forms a very narrow pyramid.

*Ginkgo biloba* 'Laciniata' - deeply divided leaves.

*Ginkgo biloba* 'Pendula' - rounded, "weeping" habit.

*Ginkgo biloba* 'Horizontalis' - branches grow in 'horizontal' direction. Not very common!

*Ginkgo biloba* 'Variegata' - yellow and green variegated leaves.

*Ginkgo biloba* 'Mariken' - very dense with ruffled leaves.

*Ginkgo biloba* 'Tremonia' - small upright growing tree with a very attractive silhouette.

