

Tree Profile: Chinese Emperor Plum - *Osteomeles schweriniae*

General information: *Osteomeles schweriniae* is one of 20 species of the family Rosaceae and is native to China and other parts of the Pacific Ocean. Its flowers are white and resemble those of hawthorn species. They flower from late spring to early summer. It produces small, white, round berries that are actually pomes. The fruits are edible and can be eaten raw or used to make jellies and jams. The fruits have a sweet flavor. *Osteomeles* is grown in gardens as an ornamental plant, but it's also used successfully for bonsai.

Lighting and Temperature: The *Osteomeles* needs exposure to full sun, but protected from the wind, for example next to a wall. They are able to withstand frost down to -10 °C. Due to its versatility it has the ability to tolerate a wide range of temperatures and light conditions.

Watering: Always water moderately, but deeply (dipping) - for example once every week, twice weekly if it is hot - subject to pot size and location. Very little watering in winter, they resist drought well.

Feeding: Feed between spring and autumn, no feeding during the winter months. Use a balanced organic fertilizer.

Pruning and wiring: They can be pruned in late winter to remove old branches or to control its growth. Can be wired, but it's easier to shape this species by clip and grow, however, they do respond to wiring well.

Propagation: Cuttings of half-ripe wood, 5 - 8cm with a heel, mid to late summer. Pot up in the autumn and overwinter in a greenhouse, success rate is fair to good (70% - 80%). Layering and seed by placing in well-drained soil, seeds germinate very slowly if they do.

Repotting: Spring is the best time to repot, but it can be done at any time if given proper aftercare. The soil should be rich in organic matter and be well drained.



Pests and diseases: They can be attacked by fungus diseases, if the humidity is too high, or by over watering. Its best treated pre-emptively with a systemic fungicide, used before flowers thicken excessively. In late winter, a broad-spectrum insecticide treatment is also advised to prevent the attack of aphids and mealybugs. Always remember that treatments are practiced when there are no flowerings.

Styles: Great for many styles including cascades, semi-cascade and rock plantings, informal, slanting and windswept. Very good for shohin and mame bonsai!

Ask Mr. Miyagi.....



Q. Mr Miyagi, Is it ok to wire and repot my Japanese maple now?

A. As the seasons have changed and we are now in autumn, your Maple is no doubt changing color, dropping its leaves and getting ready to enter its dormancy period. This is an important time in your tree's life cycle as it protects the trees delicate foliage against the harsh winter cold and frost. As your tree gets ready to go dormant, it saves water and sugars inside it to sustain it through this period and to provide energy that it can use to push new buds in the spring. With your tree dormant, it is the ideal time to study your bare tree and make plans for the next season. Think of how you can improve the tree's structure, its ramification and its styling.

When we get to the end of the winter period and into the beginnings of spring, it will be time to wire your tree, and to make your changes to the branch structure to suit your vision, as it will be fully exposed and free of leaves. The bare branching makes it easy to identify those that need re-positioning, need added movement or need to be removed altogether. Branches may be shortened by removing thicker leggy branching in favor of smaller uniform twiggling. This creates taper to the branches and tighter ramification closer in to the trunk.

If you prune too early, you could force your tree out of dormancy and back into a growth cycle. It is better to wait until late winter or early spring, just when you see the tree starting to move before you go to work.

With your branches sorted, you should be safe enough to repot the tree without placing too much stress on it. With correct after-care, the roots will grow quickly and the tree will be happy and healthy.

Members may submit questions to Mr. Miyagi c/o the YVBS web forum or per the club email: info@yarravalleybonsai.org.au