

## Tree Profile: *Pieris Japonica* - Japanese Andromeda

**General:** According to *Wikipedia* the *Pieris* is a genus of seven species of shrubs in the family Ericaceae, native to mountain regions of eastern and southern Asia, eastern North America and Cuba. Known commonly in North America as andromedas or fetterbushes, and in Australia often known as Lily of the Valley and sometimes Japanese Pearl Flower, they are broad-leaved evergreen shrubs growing to 6 m tall and 3m wide. The lanceolate-ovate leaves are spirally arranged, often appearing to be in whorls at the end of each shoot with bare stretches of shoot below. The young leaves in spring are typically brightly coloured. The fragrant flowers are bell-shaped, white or pink, arranged in racemes 5-12 cm long. The fruit is a woody capsule which splits into five sections to release the numerous small seeds. Japonica is probably the most commonly used for bonsai. CAUTION the leaves are poisonous!

**Lighting & Temperature:** Full sun, but semi-shade in midsummer. Frost hardy to -5°C.

**Watering:** Moderate - keep moist, but over-watering can cause root rot. Avoid water with high lime content. Reduce watering in winter.

**Feeding:** Use low nitrogen fertilisers like for azaleas and rhododendrons, an occasional dose of Miracid helps to keep the soil acidic.

**Repotting:** Repotting in spring, before bud burst, every 2-3 years for young plants and every 4-5 years for older ones in free draining acidic soil (like Azaleas).

**Propagation:** Air-layering, greenwood tip cuttings in spring or from semi-hardwood cuttings in summer. Cuttings are slow to take root!

**Pruning:** Trim back new shoots during growth. Can be used for most styles and sizes. Has a long flowering period, and can be pruned while still in bloom. Remove flowers as they fade. Hard pruning can be carried out after flowering

**Wiring:** Generally not necessary. Use branch pruning to shape! If wired, protect bark as it is delicate and prone to scaring.

**Pests and diseases:** It is generally a very hardy plant but is susceptible to Lace Bugs. Leaf spot, Chlorosis - yellowing of leaves due to iron deficiency and Phytophthora root rot can be a problem.

**Styles:** Formal & Informal Upright, Semi Cascade, Windswept and Root-over-Rock

### Some species variations suitable for bonsai:

***Pieris japonica*** (also called *andromeda japonica*): Japanese andromeda - has drooping clusters of flowers up to 10 cm long.

***Pieris japonica* 'Christmas Cheer'**; Japanese andromeda.

***Pieris japonica* 'Compacta'**: Dwarf andromeda, dwarf lily-of-the-valley bush.

***Pieris japonica* 'Variegata'**: Variegated dark green leaves with white edges.

***Pieris formosa***: Chinese andromeda - possibly the most attractive andromeda, with showy white flowers and fiery red new shoots.

***Pieris floribunda***: American mountain andromeda, mountain pieris, mountain fetterbush - highly toxic!



Photo Courtesy of ChineseBonsaiGarden.com

