

Tree Profile: Mugo Pine - *Pinus Mugo*

General Information: The Mugo, Mountain or Swiss Pine can be a great tree to work with. Needles tend to be naturally shorter than black pines, radiatas, or other common pine species. The Mugo pine is a single flush pine, producing only one flush of growth per growing season - so, no decandling in early summer! The Mugo is a low-growing pine, reaching typically only about 3m in the wild. Dwarf varieties are also available, which grow less than 1m and spread, but these should be avoided for bonsai cultivation as they are generally grafted and do not lend themselves to normal bonsai practices.

Lighting: Place outside in full sun, however some protection from extreme heat in summer may be warranted - remember, it is a "Mountain" pine. Full sun helps to promote shorter needle growth.

Temperature: Will tolerate most temperatures in Melbourne, however protection from extreme heat is recommended.

Watering: Be careful not to overwater, as the Mugo dislikes excessive water, like most pines. An open free-draining soil mix should be used.

Feeding: Fertilize trees in development year round. Trees in refinement or maintenance phase should be fertilized from early spring to mid-summer.

Pruning and Wiring: Elongated candles should be shortened to an appropriate length in early summer, to balance growth throughout the tree. If there are more than two candles at any location, they can be reduced to two at this time. In Autumn, you can reduce surplus shoots if you have not done this in Spring or Summer. Where more than two are growing from the same location, select two which are growing laterally and in the desired direction, form a v-shape and are of the same strength. Remove the others. In strong parts of the tree, pluck excess old needles to balance growth. It is best to wire the tree from early Autumn to early Spring, but wiring can also be done after candles shortening in summer if desired.



Photo courtesy of Australianseed.com



Photo courtesy of Bonsai4me.com



Propagation: From seed or grafting. Some can be air-layered, and sometimes cuttings may strike - try your luck!

Repotting: Mugos have a reputation for reacting badly to repotting and root pruning, however this has resulted when repotting has occurred in the traditional times of late Winter/early Spring or Autumn. Mugo pines are one of the few, if not only, variety of pine which prefers a mid-summer repot. The ideal repotting time would seem to be after the flush of spring growth is extended and trimmed back, but before the end of summer. Avoid complete bare rooting.

Pests and Diseases: Mugo pines can be affected by aphids, spider mites, scale or caterpillars, but this is not commonly a problem. Be vigilant, and spray with insecticide if any pests are discovered. They can also be affected by fungal diseases and root rot, particularly if kept too wet in winter. Guard against this by using an open soil mix and placing the tree in a sunny position.

YVBS Display Table Awards

To encourage members to bring along a bonsai of any species and style to each monthly meeting, to be placed on the display table, the Committee has decided to introduce two separate initiatives.

With the first, any member who brings along a tree for the display table will be asked to fill out a simple ID card for the tree and owner. All cards will be collected, and a random draw will be made at the end of the year, with a prize being awarded. The more entries throughout the year, the more chances of winning.

The second initiative will be a new award in memory of Rudi J which will be based on judging of the display table trees by a Committee member at each meeting - 3 points for best tree, 2 points for second best, and 1 point for third best. At the December meeting, the total points will be tallied, and the member who has accumulated the most points over the year will be awarded the "Rudi J Award".