

Tree Profile: *Prunus* Species

General information: Prunus is a genus of trees and shrubs, which includes the plums, cherries, peaches, nectarines, apricots and almonds. More than 400 species are spread throughout the northern temperate regions of the globe, with the greatest variety in Japan, China and Korea. Many of them are widely cultivated for fruit and ornament. One of the true joys of spring and autumn for deciduous bonsai are small leaved and flowering and/or fruiting species. Mostly grown in informal styles for their flower and/or fruit display. The blossom colors range from pure white through all the shades of pink and red. Attractive rugged bark and twiggy branches.



Position: Full sun, but semi-shade in summer. Protect from hot northerly winds in summer and from frost in winter.

Watering: Most varieties need frequent watering, more often in summer. Reduce watering in winter. Do not allow the flowers to get wet or they will rot.

Feeding: Every three to four weeks after flowering has finished through to late summer. Use liquid fertilizer or half-strength general purpose food, switching to a formula high in potassium towards the end of summer. No feeding through the high heat of summer, but it can be resumed thereafter till mid-autumn.

Repotting: Every second year in spring, using free draining soil. Prunus serrulata may need annual repotting, which can also be done in late autumn, after leaves drop. Always soak in Seasol after potting your trees.

Pruning and Wiring: Cut back new shots after flowering in late spring and reduce the fruit - if any, to reduce the stress on the tree! Can be carved and pruned back hard, flowers on new wood. Wiring can be done from spring to autumn - on older trees use raffia, the branches are very brittle and to protect the bark - better use guy wire.



Propagation: By layering in summer or grafting in winter and early spring. Difficult to grow from cuttings! Dig stock in autumn!

Pests and diseases: Birds love to eat the flower buds, protection may be necessary in spring. Lots of bugs love to chomp the leaves; some varieties are more resistant to insects and disease than others.

Some species suitable for Bonsai:

Prunus mume: Japanese flowering Apricot, single or double flowers in whites, pink and reds.

Prunus salicina: Japanese Plum, small white flowers, bright red autumn foliage.

Prunus serrulata: Flowering Cherry, 'Kanzan', used mainly for its remarkable flowers, pink, and so profuse they can completely obscure the branches. 'Hisakura', deep pink single flower. 'Shirotae', fragrant white semi-double flower.

Prunus spinosa: Sloe Plum, spiny shrub, small white flowers, small black fruit. Mainly used for hedging and other utilitarian purposes.

Prunus sinensis: Bush Cherry - This small-leaved cherry bears pink or white pom-pom shaped flowers.

Prunus subhirtella 'Autumnalis': Autumn Cherry, white or pink semi-double flowers. Small leaves with brilliant autumn color. It has the added advantage of more delicate twigging than most cherries.

Prunus tenella: Dwarf Russian Almond with bright pink flowers.

