

# Chinese Elm

BONSAI COMPENDIUM		CRAFTED BY BONSAI UNIT	
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Image: photo of Chinese Elm



# Chinese Elm

(*Ulmus parvifolia*)

The Chinese Elm is a popular bonsai species due to its resilience to a wide range of climates, adaptability to indoor or outdoor environment, fast growth and elegant, small serrated leaves. For this reasons, It is recommended to beginners and it is appreciated by experienced bonsai enthusiasts alike.

## Key Characteristics

**Tree Type:** Hardy, deciduous or semi-evergreen (depending on climate).

**Natural Habitat:** Native to East Asia.

**Size and Growth Rate:** Grows moderately, reaching 30-40 cm, with compact branching.

## Indoor or Outdoor?

Both! Hardy and Smooth bark

They can be grown in a light warm indoor location where they will stay in leaf and growing all year. Or they can also be grown outside where they will go dormant in winter. Place it in a spot with partial to full sunlight. Regularly rotate the tree to ensure even growth

## Watering

Maintain consistent moisture in the soil by watering the tree as often as everyday in summer (avoid water-logging though); Reduce watering in winter dormancy, do not let the soil fully dry. Best practise is to test the topsoil with your finger—water when the top feels slightly dry.

## Light and Temperature

The Chinese Elm thrives in bright, indirect sunlight, however it can tolerate well the full direct sun exposure. The ideal temperature would be 15-25 °C. Do not fret though, It can withstand wide temperatures variation from as low as -10°C to as high as mid 30C. They are not of the weak kind and bounce back quite well from hardship, however, where temperatures often drop below (-10 °C). Keeping your trees in a greenhouse or cold frame or is recommended. Alternatively cover root's with mulch or fabric (hessian, sheep wool felt fabric, horticultural fleece - see pic)

## Foliage and Trunk

In temperate climates, it is deciduous, shedding leaves in autumn. During this time, the foliage often turns golden-yellow, adding seasonal beauty.



In warmer climates or indoor environments, it may remain semi-evergreen, retaining most of its leaves year-round.

Young trees often feature smooth, grayish-green bark. As the tree matures, the bark becomes coarse and develops a rugged, flaky texture, adding character and visual interest.

## Pruning & Wiring

Best to prune in early spring. Leaves are arranged in a right-left pattern along the branch. Cut till just after a leaf, the new shoot will grow following the direction of hat leaf.

Most shaping is done with just the “Clip and grow” technic which consist in just regular pruning of new growth without the use of wire. Having said that, if you prefer or need wiring (e.g. for thicker branches) aim at doing so in late spring or mid autumn.

## Soil and Repotting

Drainage is key. You can use multi-purpose bonsai mix or multi-purpose garden compost, enriched with equal parts organic matter contents like perlite, coarse sand, coconut coir etc for aeration and drainage. Or if you wanted to you could use plain Akadama.

Repotting Frequency: every 2-3 years in early spring before new growth appears. A good rule of thumb is checking if the tree is pot bound, by carefully lifting the tree out of its pot. If so, then repot.

## Fertilizing

Use a general bonsai fertilizer, (usual composition NPK 10-10-10) during the growing season. Apply it every 2 weeks in spring/summer and once a month in autumn. Skip feeding in dormancy.

## Tips for Success

Monitor for pests like aphids or spider mites and treat promptly. Spray with appropriate insecticide. Avoid placing in drafty areas or near air conditioning.



Cut till just after a leaf, the new shoot will grow following the direction of hat leaf.





Smooth, grayish-green bark typical of a young tree.  
Here's Bonsai Unit's 8 years old Chinese Elm





**AWESOME** that you decided to read this bite size guide on Chinese Elm bonsai!  
Use this compendium to grow your bonsai and, most importantly, have fun doing it!

Don't forget to tag Bonsai Unit – @bonsaiunit – on socials. We'd love to see your trees grow and welcome other small-flat bonsai growers to the Bonsai Unit community

... **WANT TO STAY IN THE LOOP ?** ...

Dive into our [Instagram \(@bonsaiunit\)](#) for bonsai inspirations and behind-the-scenes magic.

OR

Check out more **Compendiums** on the [Bonsai Unit website](#). If your tree's not listed yet, don't panic –it's probably in the works! ;)

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Sign up to our newsletter to receive updates when new Compendiums are out and to be **THE FIRST** to hear about all the exciting stuff we've got brewing.

... **Catch you soon!** ...