

Watering bonsai is a sensitive matters as I've seen this in a lot of books and websites. But please bear with me as I explain the matter as carefully as I can.

Before watering Bonsai, the first question that arises is when to water your bonsai? It is important to bear in mind the following important properties of a good soil mix.

1. It must be porous enough to allow exchange of air. Roots need oxygen to survive.
2. The soil mix has to retain moisture but not wet. Roots need very high moisture to survive. Moisture pertains to the amount of water in the air surrounding the roots.
3. Organics are essential if you do not feed fertilizer to your plant since it provides nutrition for your bonsai.
4. If you use inorganic soil mix such as perlite, vermiculite, or sand, you need to fertilize regularly.

Popular method 1

Use a stick and poke it into the soil. This is a procedure that you do to know if the soil is still damp. You get a small stick and push it into the soil, then feel the tip of the stick between your fingers. If it is dry then you have to water your bonsai. If it is still damp, you can wait for a while before watering. If you have tried this before, you might have noticed the following:

1. The stick sometimes cut fine roots and you can feel it in your hands while poking the stick.

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2. You end up with a hole and compacted soil around the hole. you try to remove the compaction by cultivating the soil around the hole but you cut more of the fine roots.

3. You end up with a lot of holes after some time.

4. The stick is not pointed enough and it compacts the soil at the tip of the stick. You end up with a compacted soil after a long time.

5. If your soil is like acadama which disintegrates after some time, then the poking of the stick pulverizes it speeding up disintegration and you end up with a compacted soil (see [the article on preferential pathways](#))

I do not recommend this method

Popular method 2

Have you tried waiting until it wilts? This is bad for your plant. Letting your plant wilt will encourage the growth of more roots to search for water. There will be more growth below the ground than above. You will notice that this method will result to slow growth. This can also result to early pot-bounding. (see pot-bound) I do not recommend this method.

Best method

The best way is to have a

nice soil mix that you can water anytime you want without danger. Plants in the wild during rainy periods do not drown or [rot](#) . On the contrary they grow very well. If you have the right [soil mix](#) ,

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you can water as often as you want. When watering bonsai be sure to water the whole surface of the pot. If you only water one side then only the roots on that side will get water. Move your watering can around the pot to make sure that there is no dry spot on the surface. Since a bonsai pot is shallow, and the soil mix is porous water will have the tendency to go straight down the bottom of the pot and will not flow to other areas of the soil.

When watering bonsai, water directly to the soil and not the foliage. The foliage is often times thick and is much wider than the pot. Water will just flow down the foliage and out of the pot. You can water the foliage to clean it, so use clean water.

Use water from the tap. [Chlorinated water](#) is best for watering since it has anti fungal properties. Secondly water from the tap is clean and safe to drink, so you do not have to worry on residues on your leaf after it dries. Do not worry about salt accumulation or other deposits as long as you have a good soil mix that drains well. Water from a well or a storage bin will probably have fungal pores in it. This will make your bark and leaves turn black due to fungus, and could even lead to root rot.

If your bonsai has compacted soil . . .

If your bonsai has compacted soil and you do not have the time to repot it, you can water your bonsai using the pot submergence method. This is by far the safest way to water your bonsai. First, you get a tray or container larger than the pot of your bonsai. Second you put your bonsai inside. Third, fill it up with water up to the rim of the pot. Fourth, wait for ten to fifteen minutes. Fifth, remove the pot from the container and let it drain. I call this the submergence method. This is a sure shot way of watering bonsai because all of the roots will definitely get water regardless of dead zones. [Dead zones](#) , when given enough time will absorb water and support fine roots. It also scares [insects](#) away to find a new home. If there is a problem on your bonsai such as dieback, premature wilting, or insect infestation, watering bonsai by the pot submergence method will be your quick fix solution until you find time to permanently solve the problem.