

Chinese Elm

Overview: *Ulmus parvifolia* / Chinese Elm are often sold as indoor bonsai and as such are acclimatised to indoor growing conditions, however Chinese Elms are temperate trees and fully frost hardy. Chinese Elms grown indoors (or in climates with very mild winters) will remain evergreen whereas outdoor cultivation results in a deciduous tree. Though Elms should be able to cope with the adverse growing conditions indoors, they are never as vigorous as their outdoor counterparts. To be entirely frost hardy your Chinese Elm must spend the Autumn outside to harden up for the Winter; never place a Chinese Elm that has been grown indoors straight outside during the Winter,

General Cultivation: Position -Indoors- Well lit, cool position on a sunny windowsill during the winter. Keep up humidity levels. Place outside from May onwards after last frosts have finished. Try to keep outside until Autumn when the leaves can be allowed to fall naturally before bringing indoors. Outdoor - elms/acclimatised elms are fully hardy to frost though freezing winds can result in fine branches dying back if left fully exposed. Watering - indoors- Never allow compost to dry out, keep the compost evenly moist. Check the compost daily but only water when necessary. Watering daily as a routine results in sodden compost, leading to lack of vigour, root rot and eventually death. Outdoors - As with indoor watering though during periods of strong sun, high temperatures or strong growth in the Spring, trees can need far more frequent watering.

Repotting: In Spring as buds extend annually. Elms have very strong and vigorous root systems that need annual root pruning. Root-bound Elms will grow poorly. Trees overwintered indoors can be repotted in Autumn after leaf drop but before being brought inside. Repot in basic soil mix.

Fertilisation: - indoors - Balanced feed weekly through Spring and Summer. Monthly through the winter. Do not feed when out of leaf. Outdoors - Once buds open in Spring, feed weekly with high nitrogen for first month then with the slow release feed throughout the growth season.

Pruning: One of the main attractions of Elms is the great contrast that can be achieved between a thick trunk and the delicacy of very fine growth at the tips of the branches. Allow shoots to extend 3 or 4 nodes then prune back to 1 or 2 leaves as required. Pruning of large branches during the Spring and Summer can cause heavy calluses; if necessary, the size of the scar can be reduced by carrying out major pruning work in late Summer and Autumn.

