

August

Summer Care: Check constantly to determine your plants' watering needs — trees and soil dry out fast. Extra sphagnum moss can be placed on top of the soil to hold additional moisture. This is especially important for satsuki azaleas, maples, flowering and fruiting trees, and any bonsai growing in a shallow pot.

Insects can be very active this time of year — check your trees when you water. A preventive spray is good. Your local nursery can recommend an appropriate fungicide or insecticide. Remember, if you see ants marching up and down your trees, you have bugs — probably aphids or scale.

Summer Work: Light pruning and pinching may be done in summer. Heavy pruning is not recommended now because it can allow too much sunlight into the interior of the trees. Interior growth that is not used to the strong sun will burn. A newly opened up area can also burn the trunk, especially on maples. If you have to do it, keep your tree under 30-50% shade cloth.

Although June is the best time of year to work on juniper and cryptomeria, it is also okay to work on these trees in August.

For Cryptomeria, First remove spring growth with sharp scissors, leaving a small portion of the new growth. Protect these trees from the hot midday sun after cut-back and mist them a few times a day. A few weeks afterward you can pinch the new growth back lightly. Some part of the new growth needs to be kept always.

The benefit of working on junipers this time of year is that they recover faster and the branches will set faster than if the same work had been done in winter.

California and Sierra junipers can also be worked on in summer. Check to see how easily the bark splits from the hard wood before doing too much work. This is a good indicator for how severely you can bend the branches.

Decandled Japanese black pines and red pines should be sending new buds at this time. If you have more than 2 buds, leave them alone and then thin them back in Fall. You can thin them out at the same time that you pull old needles. (If you thin them to 2 buds now, those 2 buds will grow very strong. The new growth and needles will be long.)

It is time to fertilize large Japanese black pine now. Start with small amounts. Add more fertilizer every 2 weeks till mid October.

Do not fertilize small black pines or shohin yet. Fertilizing them now can produce summer growth that is too vigorous and needles that are too long.

Fertilize shohin in September.

If a tree is on the weak side, you can leave a small amount of dango (fertilizer cakes) on the trees.

If you do not see any buds, it means that the tree is very weak. You can start to fertilize lightly.

In Japan, where the black pine grows naturally, it rains a lot in June and July. It is much cooler and drier in the Bay Area. We can compensate for this by keeping our trees well watered. Water less, however, if the drainage is poor.

For five needle pines and another high mountain pines – i.e. ponderosa – jack pine – mugho – eastern white pine, after the needle has hardened off, it is time to fertilize them. We can remove brown needles as well as some yellow ones. old needles that are still green should be removed (pull or cut) around mid September. pull them off if the bark remains around the base of the needle. If there is scar at the base after you pull them, you should stop and cut those needles with scissors instead.

For spruce and hemlock, after the new needles has hardened off, it can be fertilized and thinned. use sharp scissors to cut the stems (not the needles). There should be small branches or new buds behind the cut. If there are no new buds or branches behind, it will die back to another section. Strong hot day sun or heat wave can burn foliage. Keeping your trees under 30% shade cloth during hot periods will keep the tree healthy.

For cedar and larch. Continue to fertilize them. It is still a good time to wire them. Pruning the same way you prune spruce. Look for new buds or branches behind the cut.

For Hinoki cypress and eastern white cedar (*Thuja* sp.). Fertilize them moderately year round. if there are long shoots on the strong areas of the trees, you can prune them off. otherwise leave them alone. Remove interior old needles before wiring. When you wire be careful not to damage the new foliage.

Suitable trees to work on this month.

- Junipers
- Five needle pines and high mountain pines
- Cedar
- Azalea
- Deciduous trees