

## **PRUNING:**

To maintain the shape, balance and harmony of your bonsai, you are required to constantly trim off unwanted growth. This can be similarly viewed as humans needing to remove unwanted hair. In bonsai this entails the removal - pinching or cutting off - of excess shoots and leaves. Elongated branches can be cut down to 30% or the first growing leaf or bud from the trunk. Pruning will encourage new side growth, with branch movement and character, the characteristics of a good bonsai. There are tricks and methods to cutting species, so it is advisable to ask someone who knows. To understand the desired you will need to get to understand the various styles in bonsai and also the tendencies of shape that your species grows in the wild.

Just as you like to shave and get a haircut, you need to prune your bonsai in order to maintain the shape, balance and harmony of the tree. This requires constant trimming of unwanted growth. Pruning entails the pinching or cutting off of excess shoots, leaves and aerial roots.

**ROOTS:** Unwanted aerial roots that appear can safely be cut off. The tap root serves only as anchor in the ground. So when you repot the tap root should have been removed.

**LEAVES:** Leaves may be cut in half or completely cut off. This process encourages new growth and leaf reduction. Needles need to be pinched as cutting will cause ugly brown tips.

**BRANCHES:** Generally long straight branches branched can be cut down 30% to 70%, just below a bud. The bud will then form a new branch that will change the movement of the tree and make for a more interesting bonsai. Be careful not to cut too close to the bud, as the wound will result in die back and could kill the bud and your future branch movement. Thorn trees have extensive die back, so the wanted bud must be given time to develop before the die back reaches the undeveloped branch. Thus remove branches of thorn trees below the following unwanted bud. The removal of the whole branch will depend on the style and branch harmony being sought after. Many commercial tree sealers are of a permanent nature and do not allow the wound to heal. So seal the wound with cold wood glue or olive oil. This prevents rapid drying out of the branch and the resultant black scar. In order for the wound to heal the remains of the cut off branch, must not protrude and should be flush or concave to the trunk profile. This will allow the bark (cambium) to roll and seal the wound.