

only a small amount (30% or less) of roots at a time. Repotting should only be attempted when minimum night time temperatures are in the low to mid 60's F. It is recommended to allow the plant to become root bound. After repotting, water thoroughly. DO NOT FERTILIZE FOR 3-4 WEEKS.

Design and Styling: Suitable for all styles and sizes. Makes a good classical Chinese penjing subject.



Chinese Sweet Plum Care Sheet





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S & S Bonsai of Colorado Springs, Colorado
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online sources.)

*"Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if
you were to live forever."
—Mahatma Gandhi—*

The Chinese Sweet Plum

(*Sageretia theezans*)

General Information: Sageretias theezans, also known as Chinese Sweet Plum, Chinese Bird Plum, Poor Man's Tea and Shina Amai Ume, are tender shrubs native to Asia and warmer areas of North America. Extensively grown in China for use as bonsai, Sageretias are semitropical evergreen in milder climates but become deciduous in temperate zones when exposed to the cold of winter. Sageretias will survive temperatures just below freezing but it is highly recommended to keep them in conditions that rarely drop below around 45°F to keep them in continual growth. For most parts of Europe and North America this means growing Sageretias indoors from around September to May.

Sageretias have symmetrically arranged shiny, oval mid-green leaves to 5/8" long. Young growth is reddish-bronze in color before it matures.

The bark quickly becomes scaly and is a dark-brown in color. The bark sheds while the tree is quite young and the trunk becomes multi-colored with age.

In Summer tiny flowers appear in the leaf axils of new shoots and then these produce larger clusters of white flowers followed by small blue to black fruits (1/4") during the summer and into autumn.

Sageretias are slow to form thick trunks and have very fine formative growth. Thick-trunked specimens tend to be imported from China where they are field grown.

CARE

Temperature: Grow outdoors when night-time temperatures will not drop below 55°F. If not protected or the tree encounters temps below 55°F,

it will most likely defoliate (lose most or all leaves) but if pampered should recover. It loses minor branches if the temperature dips below 25°F. Below 25°F the tree will experience major dieback, but can recover (the tree buds easily from old wood, new wood and its roots). Don't try growing outdoors unless you're in Zone 8 or higher.

Indoors, Sageretias need a position that is reasonably humid so a humidity/gravel tray is necessary and should be allowed to cool at night. Sageretia dislike permanent heat throughout the day as much as they dislike very cold temperatures. Once nighttime temperatures are consistently over 55 degrees, move the tree outside.

Lighting: Outdoors, good light but out of full sun. Beware of leaf burn when moving from shade to full sun. The best location for your Sweet Plum has full morning sun with shade in the afternoon/evening. It can take full sun all day, but watering requirements will increase dramatically. Should receive lowered illumination for 6 to 8 weeks around the winter solstice.

Indoors, position in good light but do not expose to direct afternoon sunlight when behind glass to avoid scorching.

Air: Good air movement indoors to prevent white flies and mealy bugs. This will also decrease the chance of mildew.

Watering: Keep the soil moist but not wet, use a well draining soil and water often but do not allow the pot to stand in water. If this plant dries out completely it will most likely die. Wilting can be recovered from only by a very healthy tree.

Fertilizing: When new growth appears in the spring, it's time to start feeding every two weeks throughout the Summer and monthly in the Winter when in active growth. pH is preferred at 5.5. This plant is an acid lover so many people add some peat to the potting soil and fertilize often with fertilizer for acid-loving plants (Muracid).

Water your tree BEFORE fertilizing. Do not fertilize a weak or freshly repotted tree! This will cause stress to the tree by burning the roots.

Pruning / Training: Trim to shape throughout the growing season. Sageretia back bud very easily and produce very dense new growth so it can be shaped by selective pruning and therefore wiring can be avoided. If you choose to use wire, use the thinnest training wire that will hold the branch in the desired position. Allow young plants to extend 4"-6" before pruning back to shape to allow the trunk to thicken. Never remove all the new growth at one time. Mature, thick-trunked specimens can be pruned earlier.

Growth habit is stiff and angular with truly prolific back budding.

Insects / Pests: Sageretias can be affected by aphids and whitefly, particularly when grown under glass. If affected by mildew, do not lower humidity levels but increase air circulation. There is danger of mealy bugs underneath the shedding bark. You will see spider mites due to lack of air circulation indoors. You can treat the above insects with a soap and water spray. Fungus gnats can also be a problem indoors with the constantly moist soil. Treat with Knatrol but spray twice, three days apart. Mealy bugs under the bark may require manual tweezer extraction to preserve the tree's appearance.

Propagation: From cuttings or seeds. Softwood and hardwood cuttings root easily throughout the growing season. Rooting hormone is not needed for cutting, simply put the cutting into a glass of water for 2-4 weeks. Seeds do not require a cold period and can be germinated during any season.

Repotting: Every two years in Spring. Repot when fully root bound only, using a basic soil mix; 1:1:1:1 blend of peat/turface/pumice/coca shell gives a good blend of water retention and drainage.

Root pruning should be done with care, removing