

Ten Things to Look for in Selecting a Garden center Plant for a Bonsai

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1: **Trunk**

Does the trunk have character?
Does it have suitable size?
Is there taper? No taper no tree.

2: **Location of branches**

Are the lower branches in places that are workable?
Are the branches in a location compatible with your vision of the finished bonsai?

3: **Quantity of branches**

Are there enough branches to work with? Are they of a suitable size?

4: **Roots**

Dig around the bottom of the trunk to see if there are any roots spreading out from the trunk. If they are a long way down, how does the longer length of the trunk affect the design of the bonsai?

5: **Leaf size**

Is the leaf a suitable size? Leaves can be reduced but if the normal size of the leaf is 10" and you reduce it by half, it is still 5". Is the reduced leaf size compatible with the proposed size of the final bonsai?

6: **Flexibility**

Are the branches bendable? Some plants have extremely stiff branches that once they get to a certain size cannot be bent without using extreme techniques. If you are not willing to utilize those techniques then don't buy the plant!

7: **Health**

Is the plant healthy? Is the color good? Any new growth showing?

8: **Size**

If you want BIG bonsai then buy really BIG plants. Buying a small plant and waiting for it to get big is a colossal waste of time. If you want a bonsai with a big trunk, buy a plant far bigger than what you want for a final size and then keep reducing it in size, till it is the size you want.

9: **Plant characteristics**

Will the plant bud back if you cut it back really, really hard? Many deciduous trees will but pines generally will not. If you plan on cutting the plant back severely, then make sure it will survive and grow out again!

10: **Climate adaptability**

Is the plant you are considering hardy in your climate? If they are not suitable for the weather where you live then it will require very special care to keep them alive. Are you willing to give them that care?