Ficus care calendar

Ficus microcarpa (sold as F. retusa, "ginseng" and tiger-bark forms) · indoor · RHS H1b (https://www.rhs.org.uk/plants/32855/ficus-microcarpa/details, checked 30 Oct 2026): can be grown outside in summer, minimum 10 to 15 °C; a warm, bright room the rest of the year · USDA 12 · timings for a temperate northern climate

Root & Wire · https://rootandwire.com/bonsai/care/ficus/ · a rule-of-thumb plan, not a guarantee; your garden varies

January

Keep the tree on the brightest sill you have and the pot clear of the radiator's heat. Water only when the surface of the mix is dry, then thoroughly; in a cool room that may be once a week or less. No feeding, no pruning beyond removing a dead twig.

Basis (rhs): RHS: Ficus microcarpa, https://www.rhs.org.uk/plants/32855/ficus-microcarpa/details (H1b: outside in summer only, minimum 10 to 15 °C; full or filtered light under glass); RHS advice: houseplant care in winter

February

As January. Check the undersides of leaves and the stems for scale and mealybug, which build up unseen in a warm, dry house; wipe them off. Mist or stand the pot on a tray of wet gravel if the air is very dry.

Basis (practice): general bonsai practice for indoor figs in winter; pest checks from RHS advice: scale insects, mealybugs

March

Light is returning and the tree will start to push new leaves. Begin feeding at half strength once new growth shows. Turn the pot a quarter turn each week so the crown grows evenly.

Basis (practice): general bonsai practice; feeding resumes with growth, not by the calendar

April

Water more often as growth speeds up. Wire young shoots now while they are green and flexible; they set in two to three months. First light pruning of shoots that have extended well beyond the crown's outline.

Basis (reference): Harry Harrington, bonsai4me.com species guide: Ficus; Bonsai Empire species guide: Ficus bonsai

May

Repot now if it is due (every two years young, three or four later): tease out the roots, cut back by about a third, back into a free-draining mix, water well and keep out of direct sun for a fortnight. Prune back extended shoots to two or three leaves.

Basis (reference): Peter Chan, Bonsai Masterclass (indoor figs: repot in late spring when warm); Bonsai Empire species guide: Ficus

June

Move the tree outside once nights are reliably above about 10 to 12 °C, to a sheltered spot with morning sun and afternoon shade. Water daily in warm weather, check the pot morning and evening in a heatwave. Feed fortnightly. A strong tree can be defoliated now to reduce leaf size; a weak one must not be.

Basis (estimate): the 10 to 12 °C threshold is our rule of thumb from RHS H1b (minimum 10 °C) and general practice for moving tender plants out after frosts

July

The main growing month. Keep pruning shoots back to two or three leaves as they reach six to eight. Check wire every few weeks: ficus bark marks fast. Guide any aerial roots down to the soil if you want the trunk base to thicken.

Basis (reference): Harry Harrington, bonsai4me.com species guide: Ficus (pruning and wiring); Peter Warren, Bonsai (DK)

August

As July. Watch for red spider mite in a hot, dry spell; rinse the foliage and treat if needed. Keep feeding fortnightly; a tree that has been defoliated gets a little extra.

Basis (rhs): RHS advice: glasshouse red spider mite (hot, dry conditions); general bonsai practice for summer pruning

September

Bring the tree back indoors before the first cool nights, usually early to mid September, and expect some leaf drop as it settles. Last pruning of the year early in the month; stop wiring new work. Reduce feeding to monthly.

Basis (estimate): the move-in date is our judgement from Met Office average first-cool-nights for England and the H1b minimum; practice on stopping work before winter

October

Back on the brightest sill. Water less as the light drops; let the surface dry between waterings. Stop feeding by the end of the month. Keep away from doors and draughts.

Basis (practice): general bonsai practice for indoor trees as daylight falls; RHS advice: houseplant care in winter

November

Short days: the tree is ticking over, not growing. Water sparingly and only with water at room temperature. A grow light on a timer, 10 to 12 hours a day, makes a real difference in a dark house but is not essential.

Basis (practice): general bonsai practice; grow-light hours are a common rule of thumb for indoor figs, not a measured figure

December

As November. Do nothing to the tree except water it correctly and keep it warm and lit. Wipe dust from the leaves so they catch what light there is. Plan next year's work while the tree rests.

Basis (practice): general bonsai practice for tender evergreens in a British winter

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