Hawthorn care calendar

Crataegus monogyna · outdoor · RHS H7: a common hedgerow tree of Europe, and very hardy. A pot does not change that much, though the roots in a shallow pot are less hardy than the tree in the ground and should not be left frozen solid for days. · USDA 6a-1 · timings for a temperate northern climate

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

January

Dormant and bare. Keep the pot out of standing water and, in a prolonged hard freeze, under cover. Water only when the soil is dry below the surface. The bare tree can be studied and lightly pruned for structure while every twig is visible.

Basis (rhs): RHS: Crataegus monogyna plant page (H7); RHS advice: overwintering plants in containers

February

Still dormant. Finish structural pruning of unwanted branches. Check and remove old wire. Have soil ready for repotting next month.

Basis (practice): general bonsai practice: winter structural pruning of deciduous trees

March

Repot as the buds swell, every two or three years, removing no more than a third of the roots; hawthorn roots are coarse and slow to recover, so be gentle with a collected tree. Set it in an open mix and shelter it from frost and wind for three to four weeks. Do not feed a freshly repotted tree until it is in leaf.

Basis (reference): Harry Harrington, bonsai4me.com: Crataegus species guide (repotting, root sensitivity of collected trees)

April

Leaves open, often late in the month. Begin a balanced feed once the tree is in leaf. Water as the surface dries. Watch for aphids on the new growth.

Basis (practice): general bonsai practice: feeding from leaf-out; RHS advice: aphids

May

Flowering, on trees old enough. Let the shoots extend; do not prune during flowering. Water daily in dry weather and feed fortnightly. After the flowers fade, cut extending shoots back to two or three leaves, keeping the short spurs that flowered.

Basis (reference): Bonsai Empire: Hawthorn bonsai care guide (prune after flowering; flowers on old wood); RHS: Crataegus monogyna (flowering in May)

June

Continue cutting back extending shoots to two or three leaves as they reach six to eight. Wire young shoots that have hardened slightly; older wood snaps, so shape by pruning. Water daily and feed fortnightly. Look for caterpillars and leaf spot.

Basis (reference): Harry Harrington, bonsai4me.com: Crataegus (brittle wood; clip-and-grow); general practice

July

Water daily, more in heat; hawthorn in a small pot dries fast and drops leaves when stressed. Feed at half strength. Light pruning of strong shoots only. Keep in full sun for next year's flower buds to form.

Basis (practice): general bonsai practice; RHS advice: watering container plants

August

Keep watering and feeding. Stop pruning by the end of the month so the tree can ripen its wood and set flower buds on the spurs. Thin any dense inner growth so light reaches the trunk.

Basis (practice): general bonsai practice: stop pruning late summer for flower bud formation on spur-flowering trees

September

Change to a low-nitrogen feed. Water as needed. Haws colour on a fruiting tree; leave them for the colour, though removing most of a heavy crop spares a small tree the effort.

Basis (practice): general bonsai practice: autumn feeding; thinning fruit on small trees

October

Leaves turn and fall. Stop feeding. Reduce watering. Clear fallen leaves off the soil to discourage fungus. Check for fireblight symptoms before the tree goes bare.

Basis (rhs): RHS advice: fireblight (symptoms, hygiene); general autumn practice

November

Bare. Prune and wire in detail now that the structure is visible, remembering that only young shoots bend. Water sparingly. Move an exposed tree to shelter before the first hard frosts.

Basis (reference): Peter Chan, Bonsai Masterclass (winter work on deciduous trees); general practice

December

Dormant. Keep the root ball from freezing solid for days by moving the pot under cover in a hard freeze; do not water a frozen pot. Otherwise leave the tree in the open; hawthorn needs the cold.

Basis (rhs): RHS advice: protecting plants from frost; Crataegus monogyna H7

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