

Serissa Foetida

(Wild Serissa)

(Tree of a Thousand Stars)

General: A tropical plant originally growing in the bogs of Far East Asia, this plant was recently imported from China.

Requirements: Likes to be outside in full sun until late summer. It should be brought in well before the first frost. Once inside, direct sun through a windowpane should be avoided. About 3-4 feet back from a south window or slider would be good. East light is also good; west light is really very hot and should be avoided. North light is not sufficient for the tree to survive. Once inside, warm temperatures would be preferable, go for "people" temperatures: 55-60 at night and 60-70 during the day. Humidity levels in mid-winter in Vermont are about 20%; the Sahara is 30%. In order to help the plant get through this time, a shallow tray of moist gravel under the pot would raise humidity and help greatly. If this isn't possible, placing the tree close to a kitchen where cooking causes higher humidity, would help.

Watering/Fertilizing: Water every day until fall. Once inside, you will probably still need to water daily, but, if it looks to you as if the tree is still moist, you can cut back. Watering should consist of thoroughly wetting the soil with a gentle spray. Water until it comes out the bottom of the pot. Once it has stopped "pushing" new growth it will use less water. Because it is indoors, it may continue to make new growth. If this is so, fertilize once a week with 1/4 strength Miracle Gro (use 1/4 of the "indoor" strength). Fish fertilizers are not recommended as they clog the soil. Stop fertilizing when new growth stops; start up again in the spring. This could be as early as February since the tree is indoors.

Pinching/Pruning: As new growth appears, pinch it off by gripping it between your finger and thumb. Alternatively, you can clip off close to a leaf. If it "gets away from you" don't worry - just trim it back to its original shape. Serissa's are profuse growers and will usually make new growth even from old wood so don't worry about cutting off too much.

Diseases/Worries: Serissa's are usually disease free. Warm days and cold nights may result in fungus infections. If you can provide a space that has plenty of air circulation, this will help avoid this problem. They really like a lot of sunlight and this will help in keeping it blooming. If it dries out, it will die!

Ulmus Parvifolia "Sempervirens"

(Chinese Elm)

General: An evergreen Elm originating in China, this plant was recently imported.

Requirements: Likes to be outside in full sun until fall. If it is to be kept indoors, it should be brought in before the first frost, although a minor frost would do little or no damage. Once inside, direct sun through a windowpane should be avoided. About 3-4 feet back from a south window or slider would be good. East light is also good. West light is really very hot and should be avoided. North light is not sufficient for the tree to survive. Once inside, cool temperatures would be preferable, but if you can't do this consistently, then go for "people" temperatures (55-60 at night and 60-70 during the day). Humidity levels in mid winter in Vermont are about 20%; the Sahara is 30%. In order to help the plant get through this time, a shallow pan of moist gravel under the pot would raise humidity and help greatly. If this isn't possible, close to your kitchen where cooking causes higher humidity, would help.

Watering/Fertilizing: Water every day until fall. Once inside, you will probably still need to water daily, but, if it looks to you as if the tree is still moist, you can cut back. Once it has stopped "pushing" new growth, it will use less water. There is no real need to fertilize until it starts making new growth in spring. Because it is indoors, it may start this as early as January or February. If so, start fertilizing once a week with 1/4 strength Miracle-Gro (1/4 of the "indoor" strength).

Pinching/Pruning: As new growth appears, pinch it off by gripping it between your finger and thumb. Alternatively, you can clip off close to a leaf. If it "gets away from you" don't worry - just trim it back to its original shape. Elms are profuse growers and will usually make new growth even from old wood so don't worry about cutting off too much.

Diseases/Worries: Elms are usually disease free. Warm days and cold nights may result in fungus infections. It is best to avoid misting for this reason; if you can provide a space that has plenty of air circulation, this will also help avoid this problem. Elms will drop an occasional leaf (it'll turn yellow and drop off) for no apparent reason. This is normal as long as it is a few leaves at a time. More than that is not normal. It will probably be something related to light....they really like a lot of sunlight.