

The cotoneaster

Cotoneaster interregima, Cotoneaster microphylla, Cotoneaster horizontalis.

Family: Rosaceae.

Origin: Europe, North africa, Asia.

Cotoneasters have small round leafs and depending on the species they are evergreen, semi-perennial or deciduous. The flowers are white or lightly red with red or dark fruits. Cotoneasters are normally used to cover big garden surfaces, cotoneaster horizontalis is adequate for this kind of plantings. Because of the small leafs and a trunk which is easily to form, these plants are very adequate for beginners. Growth is very fast so you can see first results very soon.

Pruning and cleaning: Eliminate dry leafs, flowers and fruits. If the plant has a big amount of fruits, remove part of them to not weaken the tree. In the month of june the new branches should be reduced to only two knots. In march and september the branches should be pruned to give the tree a compact shape. In march be sure to give the tree it's final aspect pruning the main branches with care and oblique cuts.

Temperature and exposure: They support very high temperatures and also resist (some authors say the contrary) cold periods; I have had them outside all winter resisting temperatures below -6° Celsius. Anyway, they should be protected of very cold winds.

Repotting / Soil: Repot every year or every two years (the growth is very fast) cutting at least 1/3 of the roots. The cotoneasters are not very sensible regarding the soil, I recommend the standard mixture of 1/3 of compost, 1/3 of humus and 1/3 of sand. Assure a good drainage especially on high pots as shown in the photographs. I like the dark pots (at least for the Kengai style) to contrast with the light flowers and dark green leafs.

Wiring: Wire the branches and trunk before the new sprouts grow to avoid hurting them. Use always raffia to protect the soft wood as it gets easily marked with scars.

Light: Cotoneasters need direct sunlight, but can also stay in mid-shadow. Growth will be visibly reduced if they receive not enough light.

Watering: Water frequently as the growth is active and very water consuming. Be sure to not wheaten the soil, but keep it humid the majority of time. You may let them dry out between every two or three waterings. Vaporize them a lot as they grow better and faster in humid climates. This process also avoids a lot of parasites, specially those which need dryness to develop.

Fertilizer: I use solid organic fertilizer in spring and autumn, not applying it in summer, to assure a good growth.

Diseases: The only disease I have nearly every year are aphids which I eliminate manually and with a bath in water covering the whole tree for some hours. If the attack persists, apply a very light dose of Folithion once.