



Larch – *Larix*

Larch are a Genus of deciduous conifer with around 10 species. However, there are only 3 species which are commonly seen as Bonsai in this country. All are vigorous, very hardy, tall trees in nature.

European Larch – *Larix decidua*

Native to central and southern Europe. Can be identified by its greyish bark which forms attractive cracks and ridges as the tree ages. Also, the new twigs are yellow in colour.

Japanese Larch – *Larix kaempferi*

Native to Japan but planted worldwide as a forestry tree because it is even more vigorous than the European Larch. Can be identified by its more reddish hue to the bark and new twigs.

Note: The European Larch has slightly courser twigs and needles than the Japanese Larch making it slightly harder to refine as a smaller Bonsai.

Dunkeld Larch – *Larix x eurolepis*

A hybrid of the European and Japanese Larch it can display characteristics of either parent tree but is always more vigorous than either parent.

Care

Larch are an excellent tree for beginners as there is plenty of raw material available, they are fast growers, the trunks fatten up relatively fast and older wood remains flexible enough for wiring without breakages. They are also easy to look after but with a couple of important points to remember when it comes to repotting.

Repotting



The Larch is most likely the tree we repot first in the calendar year and usually much earlier than other trees in our collection. Larch can be quite fussy when it comes to repotting and this should only be undertaken just as the buds have swollen and you start to see the tiniest bit of green in the bud tip. If the needles have started to extend from the bud it is suggested that it is too late to repot without risking the tree and is best left alone. Larch resent being pot-bound so should be repotted more frequently than other trees. This may be annually for smaller trees. However, Larch also resent root disturbance so do not bare-root or heavily prune the roots. The roots of Larch in the dormant period naturally appear slimy and brown which has often lead people to think they are rotten or diseased and therefore they get cut away. This is not the case as the roots are perfectly healthy.

Position

Larch can tolerate full summer sun but must not be allowed to dry out as the needles will scorch. Larch are very hardy trees and can be left without winter protection to temperatures as low as -15 to -20 degrees C. Larches carrying wire over winter may be less hardy but this is not usually a problem in the UK.

Watering

Water well if in full sun over Summer when they can become very thirsty otherwise keep evenly moist as normal.

Feeding

For development feed heavily with a high nitrogen feed as soon as the buds burst in Spring. For developed trees use a balanced feed as normal. Larch enter a dormant period at mid-Summer so stop all feed. Use a low nitrogen feed from late Summer to Autumn to strengthen the tree for the oncoming Winter.

Pruning

Hard prune older branches for branch development in late Winter to encourage new bud formation. Maintenance prune new shoots throughout the year as required. Look closely for the tiny red buds on new shoots and prune back to leave one or two of these.

Other notes: