

# Pyracantha

**A**re covered with white flowers in spring and bright red or orange berries through the winter. A great addition to any collection. PYRACANTHA species/ FIRETHORNS  
Pyracantha is a genus of about 7 species of spiny, evergreen shrubs that have a spreading to erect habit. Native to scrub and woodland margins from southern USA to SW Asia, the Himalayas, China and Taiwan where mature specimens can reach heights of around 4 or 5 metres with a 5 metre spread. Pyracantha are commonly cultivated in the US to grow up walls and other places where green coverage is needed but as bonsai, Pyracantha are eminently suitable for growth as erect trees. Pyracantha are especially favoured for their year-round broad-leaved foliage, their abundant flowering capabilities and for their numerous fruit in Autumn. The common name Firethorn is derived from the fiery berry colour and very sharp 1" long thorns that are carried on all branches. Leaves are narrowly ovate, dark-green to around 5cm. Small, typically white flowers are borne in corymbs in mid-Summer and can completely submerge specimens. The showy, spherical berries that follow by August/September are yellow, red or orange depending on the species or variety.  
SPECIES TYPICALLY USED FOR BONSAI INCLUDE *Pyracantha augustifolia* P. *augustifolia* itself has orange-yellow berries but there are many varieties now available which carry different berry colours. *P. augustifolia* is native to W China and is only reliably hardy to -2°C when grown in a bonsai container. *Pyracantha coccinea* Very similar to *P. augustifolia* varieties but more frost hardy. Native to SE Europe. Again there are a large number of varieties that carry different coloured berries.  
BONSAI CULTIVATION NOTES  
POSITION Full sun or partial shade. Pyracantha's as a rule need winter protection. *P. augustifolia* varieties are regarded by some as indoor varieties during the Winter as they will not tolerate temperatures below -2 to -4°C. Inside, trees should be kept in a cool, unheated environment. *P. coccinea* varieties are more frost resistant and should be kept outside if possible, though protection against temperatures below around -5°C should be given. Also protect against strong freezing winds.  
REPOTTING Repot every two to three years as leaf-buds extend. Pyracantha's resent repeated root-disturbance so try not to repot annually.