

The Care & Pruning of a Potted Frangipani

Bring the tropics to your outdoors by adding a potted frangipani (*Plumeria*). This tropical, small tree makes a suitable containerized specimen. The sweetly scented flowers come in a rainbow of colors and accent the large green foliage. When grown in desired conditions, potted frangipani care is basic and pruning requirements minimal. Given appropriate protection, the small tree will thrive in cooler, frost-prone climates.

Climate Requirements

Frangipani prefers dry, warm and frost-free climates. It is hardy grown outdoors in Sunset's Climate Zones 12, 13, 19, 21 through 24, H1 and H2. Gardeners residing in cooler locations should grow it in containers. Bring potted plants indoors when temperatures drop to 32 degrees F. For the best performance and blooms, grow in full to partial sun. Trees receiving six to eight hours of sunlight produce the most abundant blooms, according to the South California Plumeria Society. Frangipani benefits from afternoon shade when summer conditions are dry, sunny and hot. The tree is moderately salt-tolerant.

Potted Planting

Grow potted frangipani inside pots that drain. Cuttings 12 inches and smaller grow well inside 1-gallon pots. For larger trees, use larger containers such as 3- to 7-gallon sizes. These allow adequate space for proper root development and are large enough to keep the tree upright, as mature plants can become top heavy. Use a potting mixture that drains well, such as 2 parts of a cactus mix and 1 part perlite.

Watering and Fertilization

Frangipani does not tolerate growing in wet and soggy conditions. Wet conditions create root rot, causing the tree to die. During the growing season of spring through early autumn, water the tree every week to two weeks. Dormancy occurs in winter, and plants require water only when the soil dries out. Fertilize spring through autumn, applying every three to four months. Use a water-soluble blend high in phosphorus (middle number), which promotes blooming. Mix 1 to 2 teaspoons of a 10-30-10 or 10-52-10 into water and pour over the soil.

Pruning

Prune frangipani only to control its size or shape or to remove broken and diseased branches. Use loppers or bypass pruners. Trim the branch flush to its joining point on a main branch or trunk. Avoid ripping and damaging the tree's bark by removing long and heavy branches by starting the first cut approximately 12 inches from the main branch. Prune through a third of the branch, cutting from bottom to top. Make the second cut approximately 1 inch from the first cut. Prune through a third of the branch, cutting from top to bottom. Lastly, cut the branch off flush to the trunk and it should fall without trunk damage. Frangipani tolerates pruning year-round, though winter pruning reduces springtime flowers.

Diseases and Pests

Few diseases are problematic to frangipani. Orange powder or blisters cover foliage undersides infected with plumeria rust (*Coleosporium plumeria* Pat.). Rust is rarely life-threatening, but defoliation can occur. Treat severe problems with a fungicide, following label directions. When aphids, scale, mealybugs or whiteflies are present, black sooty mold can cover the foliage. Controlling the insect problem ultimately controls the mold problem. Use an insecticide, following all directions. Plumeria stem borers damage branches from the inside out, causing withering and death. Insecticidal treatments are ineffective. Infected branches require removal. Stressed frangipani are most at risk of developing insect and disease problems.

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