



Cliff Finch's Topiary Zoo

Ivy Topiary Maintenance

1. Wash ivy topiaries off frequently with spray from a hose or under the faucet in a sink. Keeping the leaves free of dust helps prevent insect infestation, especially spider mites.
2. Let the top inch or so of the soil dry out between watering. Too much water is the cause of many an ivy's death! Frequency of watering depends on many factors: the season, the kind of pot (clay or plastic), the soil, and the size of the pot. Try to keep it evenly moist.
3. Repot the topiary when the root system fills the container. The first sign of this is roots protruding from the drainage holes. The topiary can be moved to a slightly larger container. Any roots that are circling should be loosened. If the larger container seems out of proportion with the topiary, the same container can be used by trimming the roots and adding fresh soil. A topiary that is root bound will decline in health, the leaves may become lighter green, and water runs through the pot quickly.
4. Ivy topiaries and topiaries made of vining plants require a little different training than shrub topiaries. The vines can be wound around the wire if it's an open frame, until the wire is full. At that point the vine can be trimmed, always cutting right behind a leaf node. If the topiary is not open (as a wreath is) and the result is a solid look (such as a duck), then weave the vine across the open areas, securing it under previously woven vines. When the effect is achieved, just trim the excess off. This results in a fuller topiary with time.
5. If aphids, spider mites, or mealy bugs are found, use a lightweight horticultural oil according to directions on the label. Other products available are safer soap, pyrethrums, malathion, or a systemic. Keeping the plant healthy is the best defense against pests.
6. Fertilize the topiary biweekly or monthly; fertilize during periods of active growth. A water soluble fertilizer such as Peters or Miracle Grow is easy to use.