



This guide will walk you through the process of creating an ideal starter bonsai mix using pumice, scoria, and akadama, tailored for enthusiasts in New Zealand.

Substrate Components

1. Pumice:

- Description: A lightweight, porous volcanic rock.
- Benefits: Excellent for aeration and water retention, prevents root rot by allowing excess water to drain away, and retains nutrients.

2. Scoria:

- Description: A volcanic rock that is heavier than pumice but still porous.
- Benefits: Provides good drainage, improves soil structure, and prevents soil compaction, which promotes healthy root growth.

3. Akadama:

- Description: A clay-like granular material from Japan.
- Benefits: Retains moisture and nutrients well, slowly breaks down over time to provide long-term benefits, and helps with root development.

The Starter Mix Ratio

Creating the perfect bonsai mix involves balancing these components to suit your bonsai's needs. A commonly recommended ratio is:

- 1 part pumice
- 1 part scoria
- 1 part Akadama

This blend ensures a mix that provides adequate drainage, aeration, and moisture retention.

Steps to Create Your Bonsai Mix

1. Gather Your Materials:

- Pumice, scoria, and akadama are available from most garden centres or online stores in New Zealand.

2. Prepare the Ingredients:

- Sift the Pumice: Remove fine dust particles that can clog the mix and reduce aeration.
- Rinse the Scoria: Ensure it is clean and free from dust.
- Prepare the Akadama: If the akadama is in large chunks, break it down to a more suitable size for your bonsai.

3. Mix the Components:

- Measure out equal parts of pumice, scoria, and akadama.
- Combine them thoroughly in a large container, ensuring an even distribution of each component.

4. Test the Mix:

- Check the drainage by pouring water into the mix. It should drain well but retain enough moisture without becoming waterlogged.

5. Adjust if Necessary:

- If the mix retains too much water, add more pumice or scoria.
- If it drains too quickly and doesn't retain enough moisture, increase the amount of Akadama.

Using Your Bonsai Mix

1. Repotting:

- Gently remove your bonsai from its current pot, taking care not to damage the roots.
- Trim any excess roots to promote new growth.
- Place a layer of your bonsai mix in the bottom of the new pot.
- Position your bonsai and fill in around the roots with more mix, pressing gently to eliminate air pockets.

2. Watering:

- Water your bonsai thoroughly after repotting, ensuring the mix is well-moistened.
- Adjust your watering schedule based on the specific needs of your bonsai species and the local climate.

3. Maintenance:

- Monitor the condition of the mix over time. Akadama will break down slowly, so you may need to repot your bonsai every few years to refresh the mix.

Conclusion

Creating a bonsai mix with pumice, scoria, and Akadama is a crucial step in ensuring the health and vitality of your bonsai. By following this guide, you'll provide a well-balanced growing medium that supports robust root development, proper drainage, and adequate nutrient retention.

Please remember, this is a starter and should be updated according to your location, rain fall, tree species and your time availability.