



The Thames River Garden Club

Growing Gardens, Growing Ourselves

How to Propagate Houseplants

Houseplants are fun to grow, providing fragrance, color, and interest in your home. It is easy to propagate your favorite plants; and as they multiply, they can become inexpensive and wonderful gifts for your family and friends!

This workshop will focus on the use of cuttings and division to propagate houseplants.

Materials needed for propagating plants:

- Parent plant, preferably healthy, but you can revive declining plants as well
- Sharp, clean knife, scissors or pruning shears
- Small pots or containers. Take out plastic cold cups with lids are an option
- Potting soil, perlite, or vermiculite
- Rooting hormone, used when rooting in soil (optional)
- Plastic bags or humidity domes (optional)

How To Propagate by Cuttings

There are two kinds of cuttings: leaf cuttings and stem cuttings. All cuttings should come from the vigorous healthy shoots of the plant.

Stem Cuttings (also known as *slips*)

Stem cuttings should be 4-6 inches long. Cut just below a node (The node is just below where a leaf is attached to the stem) with a sharp, clean knife. The cutting should include a minimum of three nodes.

Remove leaves from the lower half of the cutting.

Rooting in Water:

- Place the cutting in a clean glass container filled with water. Be sure the water line is below the lowest leaf on the cutting. Otherwise, the leaves will rot in the water.
- Set the cutting in indirect sunlight. Keep the water topped up and refreshed. When the roots get to an inch long, pot the cutting in a clean pot following the planting directions below.

Rooting in Soil:

- Cuttings may also be planted directly into clean/sterile pots filled with good planting medium (approximately 1/3 vermiculate mixed with 2/3 potting soil).
- Dip the cutting into a rooting hormone (easy-to-root plants such as coleus will not need the rooting hormone). Keep the cuttings clean – do not place in dirty containers or on dirty tables.
- Plant the cutting 1 to 2 inches deep. Firm the soil around the base and water.
- *Optional:* Place a stake in the pot and then cover with a large plastic bag. Do not allow the plastic to touch the leaves.
- Place in indirect sunlight.
- Maintain high levels of humidity at all times and do not allow the soil to dry out during the rooting process.
- Never place a plastic-covered pot in direct sunlight. Heat will build up under the plastic and burn the foliage.

Leaf Cuttings

- Cut a leaf from your plant, just above the soil surface.
- At the bottom of the leaf section, cut a notch or V shape, angling your shears at a 45-degree angle from the corners towards the center. This helps increase the surface area for maximum root growth.
- Leave your cutting somewhere safe to dry for 48 hours, so the cut edges harden.
- Once your cutting has calloused over, put the angled end into a glass of water or nestle it in into a pot of free draining planting soil.
- Place your pot or glass in a sunny spot and either mist the soil to keep it moist (but not wet) or keep the water topped up and refreshed.
- Wait for roots to grow (it can take several weeks for roots to develop).

How To Propagate by Division and Offsets

Division

- Separate the plant's root ball into multiple pieces and repot each piece to become its own plant. You'll want to do this outside or over some newspaper. It can get messy.
- Remove the plant from the container to expose the roots.
- Lay the plant with the root ball on its side and use your fingers or hands to loosen the root ball and separate the plant into smaller pieces (halves or quarters).
- A knife can be used if the root ball is too difficult to separate with hands.
- Make sure each section is a good size with healthy leaves, stems, and roots on each piece.
- Replant each new division in a new container of well-draining potting soil. Make sure it's quite a snug fit and that you pot up to the previous soil level, so that no roots are exposed. Gently firm the soil in around the root ball and tap the pot a few times to make sure the soil has settled.
- Water the new plants and place them in a warm location with bright, indirect light.
- Once established, you should start seeing new growth.

Offsets (also known as pups)

- Offsets are miniature versions of the main plant, and you'll see them growing in the soil next to it or hanging from the main plant on a long stem. You should only remove offsets that already look like mini plants, not ones that are just developing.
- For offsets that appear in the soil you will need to remove the plant from its pot, exposing the roots.
- Gently break or cut away the baby plants from the parent plant - making sure that each baby plant has some roots, and that the mother plant has plenty of roots left. You may be able to wiggle the plantlets free or tease the roots apart to separate them. Be delicate.
- Repot the mother plant back into its original pot (topping up with fresh soil) and pot up your offsets into their own little pots. Water them in lightly.

Sources

Penn State Extension

[https://extension.psu.edu/propagating-houseplants.](https://extension.psu.edu/propagating-houseplants)

Iowa State University Extension and Outreach

<https://yardandgarden.extension.iastate.edu/how-to/how-propagate-houseplants-division-and-offsets>

<https://yardandgarden.extension.iastate.edu/how-to/how-propagate-houseplants-cuttings>

University of Missouri Extension

<https://extension.missouri.edu/publications/g6560>

Good Housekeeping

<https://www.bhg.com/propagating-houseplants-in-winter-8752859>

<https://www.bhg.com/gardening/houseplants/care/propagating-houseplants/>