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G77-337 Propagating House Plants

Dale T. Lindgren

University of Nebraska - Lincoln, dlindgren1@unl.edu

Don Steinegger

University of Nebraska--Lincoln, dsteinegger1@unl.edu

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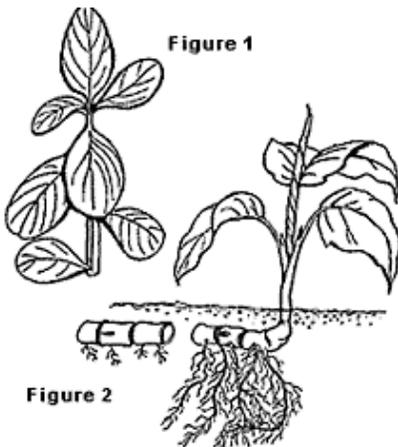


Propagating House Plants

Dale Lindgren, Department of Horticulture
Donald Steinegger, Department of Horticulture

Propagating house plants in the home is an inexpensive and enjoyable hobby. The home is not always the ideal place, but most house plants can be propagated there satisfactorily with a minimum of special equipment.

Methods of Propagation



House plants may be propagated asexually, in which all new plants will be identical, in most cases, to the parent plant, or sexually, where the new plants will not necessarily be identical to the parent plants. Plants are propagated sexually by seeds. Cuttings, air-layering, division and runners are asexual methods of propagation.

Seeds: Some plants like cactus and African violets can be raised in the home from seed. Plants grown from seeds take longer to reach maturity but are less costly than purchasing commercially available house plants. Variation among seedlings can make this method of propagation interesting.

There are many ways of germinating seed. Some are quite simple while others are complex. Basically, all are intended to provide seeds with the proper moisture and temperature conditions. Useful germinating media for seeds include sand, sphagnum moss, peat moss, vermiculite, perlite, and a mixture of these media. Vermiculite and perlite, being sterile and relatively inexpensive, make excellent media for germinating seeds. Other germinating media should be pasteurized by placing them in a shallow pan in the kitchen oven. Heat the oven until the temperature of the media reaches 180°F. Maintain this media temperature for one-half hour and then remove from the oven.

For germinating seed, follow the following steps:

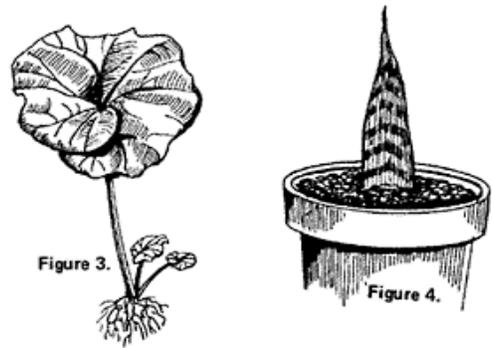
1. Place the pasteurized medium in a container which has a drainage hole in the bottom.
2. Moisten the medium by placing the container in a shallow pan of water. Remove when top of soil is moist.
3. Spread seeds in rows over surface of the medium.
4. Cover seeds according to directions on packet. Small seeds like African violets or begonia should not be covered.
5. Place container in polyethylene bag and seal the ends with tape or twist-ems.

6. Set container on a window sill in indirect sun. Temperature of 65 to 75°F.
7. No watering required until bag is removed.
8. Remove bag when first seedling leaves are present. Provide maximum amount of light required by seedlings.
9. Transplant, when first true leaves develop (usually the third leaf).

Cuttings: Cuttings are severed parent parts which produce roots and/or stems to form a new and independent plant. Stems, leaves, or roots may be used. Equipment needed for rooting cuttings include a container, rooting medium, a sharp knife, a plastic bag, a source of plant material and in some cases a rooting hormone. A rooting hormone is useful for encouraging rooting on difficult to root cuttings.

There are several methods of propagating plants by cuttings. All are intended to provide the cuttings with the proper moisture and temperature conditions just as with germinating seeds. Cuttings can be rooted in water, sand, perlite or vermiculite. Some plants are easy to root in water, but perlite or vermiculite generally give more satisfactory results.

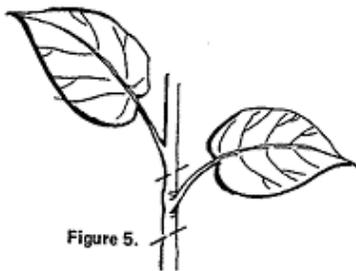
Select cuttings from healthy plants. When taking cuttings, make all cuts clean and at an angle through the stem, making sure there is at least one node (joint) under the surface of the medium. Push the cuttings down in the medium about one inch. The medium should be moist but not soggy. Slip an airtight polyethylene bag over the cuttings and around the container. No further watering will be necessary. Place in a room at 60 to 70° F. Cuttings can be potted when they show an abundance of roots.



Types of Cuttings

Tip and Stem Cuttings: Tip cuttings (taken from the tip of plants) are used to propagate such common house plants as the velvet plant and jade plant. Tip cuttings are generally 3 to 5 inches long and are removed from the parent plant at a point just below a leaf (*Figure 1*).

Swedish ivy, pilea and fittonia can be propagated by stem cuttings (sections of stems with leaves attached). The cuttings should have three or four leaves for best rooting.



Cane Cuttings: Cane cuttings are used for propagating dumbcane, Chinese evergreen and similar plants which produce cane-like or leafless stems. The cane is cut up into small pieces 2 to 3 inches long. Place the cuttings on their sides slightly below the surface of the rooting medium. A bud will eventually sprout and form a new stem when the cutting is rooted (*Figure 2*).

Whole Leaf Cuttings: Whole leaf cuttings are prepared from leaves with or without their stalks (called petioles). Roots and leaves will eventually form at the base of the leaf (*Figure 3*). Peperomia and African violets are commonly

started by whole leaf cuttings.

Leaf Section Cuttings: Leaf section cuttings can be used for propagating plants like the Rex begonia and snake plant. The leaves are cut into pieces, with the edge of the cuttings closest to the base of the parent plant inserted into the rooting medium (*Figure 4*).

Leaf Bud Cuttings: Leaf bud cuttings consist of a single leaf attached to a piece of 1 to 1 1/2 inch stem. The dormant bud, located where the leaf stalk joins the stem will give rise to a new shoot and branches (*Figure 5*). The cutting should be inserted in the rooting medium with the bud about 1/2 inch below the surface. English

ivy is easily propagated by this method.

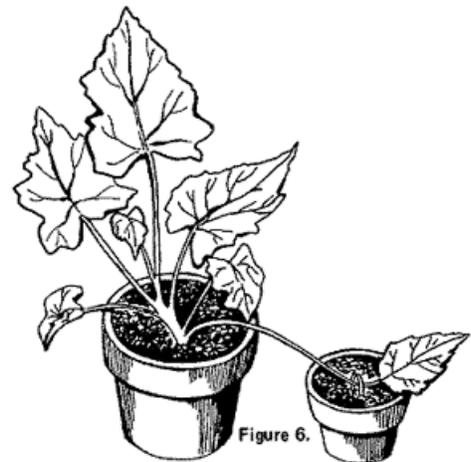
Cuttings from succulents or cactus should be allowed to dry for 1 to 7 days, depending upon species and size, before placing in a rooting medium. The drying period will cause the cut edges to callous. This will prevent the absorption of excessive amounts of moisture that could result in rotting.

Division

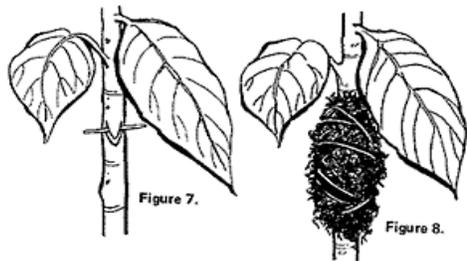
Division is the quickest way to propagate plants which produce stems at their base. To divide a plant, remove it from the container and separate the plant into smaller pieces with a knife or the fingers. Each division should have some roots. Divisions without roots may be rooted as tip cuttings. Plants can be divided at any time, although the dormant or rest period is best. Use division rather than leaf cuttings to propagate variegated plants, such as sansevieria. Non-variegated type is produced from leaf cuttings.

Runners

Runners, which are prostrate creeping shoots or stems, such as found on strawberry geraniums, can be used to propagate house plants. Place the leafy cluster of the runners in contact with a sandy loam soil in a second pot and hold them down with a paperclip or similar item (*Figure 6*). When roots have developed from the cluster, the new plant can be cut free from the runner. A simpler method would be to cut off the leafy clusters along with a small section of stem and root them as tip cuttings.



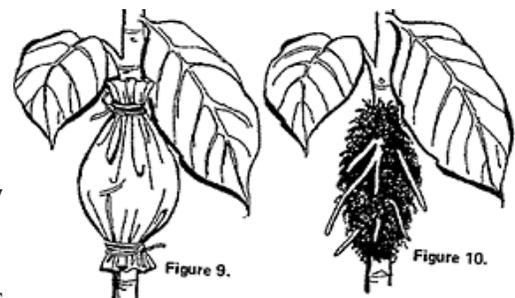
Air-layering



Air layering is a method extremely useful in shortening certain plants which become "leggy." With a sharp knife, make an upward or downward slanting cut 1 to 1 1/2 inches long and about one-quarter to one-half way through the stem. Insert a matchstick or toothpick into the wound to prevent it from healing over and dust a small amount of rooting hormone, if available, into the incision (*Figure 7*). The rooting hormone usually hastens rooting if applied correctly, although some plants root just as well untreated. Remove leaves or twigs on the chosen stem about 3 to

4 inches above the incision point. Wrap the wound with two handfuls of moist, but not soggy, sphagnum moss to form a ball around the stem (*Figure 8*). Wrap the moss with plastic film (example, a freezing bag) and seal the seam and edges with cellophane or electrical plastic waterproof tape or twist-ems to prevent water loss from the moss (*Figure 9*).

After several weeks, roots should be visible near the edges of the moss ball under the plastic sheet. When a good root system has formed, remove the plastic film and sever the rooted tip from the stock plant at a point just below the ball of moss and roots. (*Figure 10*). Pot the rooted layer in the recommended soil mixture. The remaining portion of the cane can be saved and new buds will arise on it.



These are the most common methods of propagating house plants in the home. Other more detailed references for propagating house plants are listed below.

References:

Hartmann, H. T. and Kester, D. E. 1968. *Plant Propagation, Principles and Practices*. Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey.

Free, M. 1957. *Plant Propagation in Pictures*. Doubleday and Company, Inc. Garden City, New York.

Loewer, Peter. 1975. *Seeds and Cuttings*. Walker & Co., New York.

Table I. List of common house plants and methods for propagating them. Some Species (spp) may be propagated by more than one method.	
African Violet (<i>Saintpaulia</i> spp)	Seeds; whole leaf cuttings; division
Aloe (<i>Aloe</i> spp)	Division
Arrowhead (<i>Syngonium</i> spp)	Root cuttings that include a leaf node
Bloodleaf of Beefsteak Plant (<i>Iresine</i> spp)	Tip cuttings
Boston Fern (<i>Nephrolepis exaltata bostoniensis</i>)	Division; runners
Bromeliad (Many types)	Division
Cactus (Many types)	Seeds; whole leaf cuttings
Caladium (<i>Caladium</i> spp)	Division
Christmas Cactus (<i>Zygocactus</i> spp)	Tip cuttings
Croton (<i>Codiaeum</i> spp)	Seeds; tip cuttings; air-layering
Devil's Backbone (<i>Pedilanthus tithymaloides variegatus</i>)	Stem cuttings
Dracaena	Stem cuttings; air layering; cane cuttings
Red-margined Dracaena (<i>D. marginata</i>)	
Masange's Dracaena (<i>D. fragrans mauangeana</i>)	
Ribbon Dracaena (<i>D. sanderiana</i>)	
Gold Dust Dracaena (<i>D. godseffiana</i>)	
Dumbcane (<i>Dieffenbachia</i> spp)	Tip cuttings; cane cuttings; air-layering; division
English Ivy (<i>Hedera helix</i>)	Leaf bud cuttings
False Aralia (<i>Dizygotheca</i> spp)	Seeds; air-layering; stem cuttings
Fiddleleaf Fig (<i>Ficus lyrata</i>)	Air-layering
Fittonia (<i>Fittonia</i> spp)	Stem cuttings
Jade Plant (<i>Crassula</i> spp)	Tip cuttings; stem cuttings
Kalanchoe	
Christmas Kalanchoe (<i>K. blossfeldiana</i>)	Leaf cuttings; stem cuttings
Dwarf Purple Kalanchoe (<i>K. pumila</i>)	Leaf cuttings; stem cuttings
Panda Plant (<i>K. tomentosa</i>)	Leaf cuttings; stem cuttings
<i>Kalanchoe pinnata</i>	Plantlets on leaves
<i>Kalanchoe daigremontiana</i>	Plantlets on leaves
<i>Kalanchoe verticillata</i>	Plantlets on leaves
Moses in the Cradle (<i>Rhoea</i> spp)	Division; seeds

Norfolk Island Pine (<i>Araucaria</i> spp)	Seeds
Passion Flower (<i>Passiflora</i> spp)	Seeds; stem cuttings
Peperomia (<i>Peperomia</i> spp)	Tip cuttings; whole leaf cuttings; leaf bud cuttings; division
Philodendron	
Heartleaf Philodendron (<i>P. oxcardium</i>)	Stem cuttings
Velour Philodendron (<i>P. andreanum</i>)	Stem cuttings; air-layering
Elephants Ear Philodendron (<i>P. domesticum</i>)	Stem cuttings; air-layering
Fiddleleaf Philodendron (<i>P. panduraeformae</i>)	Stem cuttings; air-layering
Splitleaf Philodendron (<i>p. pertusum</i>)	Stem cuttings; air-layering
Pilea (<i>Pilea</i> spp)	Stem cuttings; division
Poinsettia (<i>Euphorbia pulcherrima</i>)	Tip cuttings (allow wound to heal)
Prayer Plant (<i>Marantha</i> spp)	Division
Rubber Plant (<i>Ficus elastica</i>)	Air-layering; seeds
Schefflera (<i>Brassaia</i> spp)	Seeds; cuttings of half ripened stems
Sentry Palm (<i>Howeia</i> spp)	Seeds
Snake Plant (<i>Sansevieria</i> spp)	Leaf section cuttings, division
Spider Plant (<i>Chlorophytum</i> spp)	Division; runners
Swedish Ivy (<i>Plectranthus</i> spp)	Stem cuttings
Umbrella Plant (<i>Cyperus</i> spp)	Seeds; division; upside down stem cuttings
Velvet Plant (<i>Gynura</i> spp)	Tip cuttings; stem cuttings
Wandering Jew (<i>Zebrina</i> spp)	Stem cuttings

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