



PROPAGATING HOUSEPLANTS

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The best time to propagate houseplants is while the plant is actively growing. The most common methods are stem cuttings, leaf cuttings, division, layering and airlayering.

STEM CUTTINGS: These work effectively on soft-stemmed plants such as Coleus, Syngonium, Hoya, Dieffenbachia and Philodendron. Use a clean, sharp knife or snip. Cut a 3- to 4-inch piece of stem from the tip of the parent plant. Make the cut below any node on the stem.

Take a clean container and add a good potting media up to about an inch below the top of the container. Take off the lower leaves and leave at least two nodes bare for insertion into the planting media. Dip the stem into a rooting powder and plant directly into the media. Water thoroughly after planting. To increase the chance of success, enclose the pot in a clear plastic bag, making a miniature greenhouse for the cutting which increases the humidity. Place the plant in a warm, shady area. The cutting will signal root development by showing signs of growth. Then remove the plastic bag and continue to keep the soil moist to encourage a good root system. Gradually bring it into more light. The variety of the plant will determine how much light it needs.

Rooting in water: Not all plants root in water. Some that do root well in water are Creeping Charlie, Pothos and some Philodendrons. Within ten days the root will begin to appear. Plant the cuttings in small pots when a good-sized root system develops in a good potting media. Cuttings may suffer or go into shock when moved from the water into the soil. Keep water clean and fresh, changing every few days or add horticultural charcoal.

LEAF CUTTINGS: The leaf cutting method of propagation works well with African violets and some succulents. Using a sharp knife or scissors, cut an entire leaf with stem from the parent plant. Cut the stem to about 1-½ inches in length, making a diagonal cut. Allow the cut to callus for an hour. Insert the leaf in water after adding a little horticultural charcoal. You can also place the cutting directly into the potted media after dipping the stem end into rooting powder before planting.

Cover the container with aluminum foil or waxed paper to make the leaf stand up with the stem dangling in water. Secure it with a rubber band. Make a small hole in the top and lower the leaf through the hole. This will allow the stem to dangle freely in the water without wetting the leaf.

After roots appear and are about ½ inch long, you are ready to pot the rooted leaf. Use a small (2 inch) container to pot the newly rooted leaf. Repot into a larger container after the plant has several leaves. In potting media such as peat and perlite or vermiculite, use a ½ inch peat and ½ inch perlite or vermiculite. If placed in this material, insert the leaf at a slight angle and lightly place the mixture around the leaf. Succulents will readily root when placed in part soil, part sand, part perlite or vermiculite mixture.

DIVISION: This method works with plants that have multiple crowns on those growing from more than one main stem. This includes the Aspidistra or Cast Iron Plant, Spider Plant or Spathiphyllum. Carefully remove the plant from the pot and gently pull the clump into desired sections. Use a sharp knife to cut through the root ball for plants with particularly thick and tough roots. Try not to damage the root system. It is best to pull the plant apart as much as possible before using a knife to cut the roots. Pot the new sections after you have divided the plants.

LAYERING: Vining plants can be propagated by winding the stem around so that it makes contact with the soil. Hold the vine to the soil with a hairpin or a paper clip cut in half or a small rock. New roots will form at the nodes. Cut the stem off after the roots have formed. Remove the new plants and pot separately.

AIRLAYERING: For *Dracaena*, *Ficus* and other nonvining plants air layering is accomplished by removing one inch of the bark around the stem, dusting with rooting powder. Then cover above and below the cut area with moist sphagnum moss and wrap with foil or plastic. Depending on the plant and time of year, it will take a few weeks to several months for roots to form. Make sure the sphagnum does not dry out. Once roots form, cut the rooted section off and pot.

HOUSE PLANT NAME	METHODS	COMMENTS
African Violet <i>Saintpaulia ionantha</i>	Leaf cuttings or division	Easy.* Propagate in water or soil, using a rooting hormone powder.
Aloe <i>Aloe spp.</i>	Stem cuttings and offsets	Easy.*
Aluminum Plant <i>Pilea cadierei</i>	Leaf cuttings or division	Needs good drainage.
Amaryllis <i>Hippeastrum x hybridum</i>	Bulbs, force indoors in fall, plant outdoors in spring	Easy.*
Arrowhead Vine <i>Syngonium podophyllum</i>	Stem cuttings	Very Easy.*
Asparagus Fern <i>Asparagus sprengeri</i>	Seeds, division	Divisions are easy.*
Begonia Wax <i>Begonia semperflorens cultorum</i>	Leaf cuttings or division	Use plastic pots. Pinch back straggly growth.
Bird's Nest Fern <i>Asplenium nidus</i>	Spores	Most ferns are difficult. Best to buy small plants. Avoid strong sunlight.
Bromeliad <i>Bromeliaceae</i>	Offshoots, divide clumps, or seeds	Easy* with offshoots that develop at base of plant.
Cactus Cereus types <i>Cereus spp.</i>	Seeds, cuttings, and offsets	Seeds take longer. Dry off or callus end of stem cutting before planting.
Cast Iron Plant <i>Aspidistra elatior</i>	Division	Easy.*
China Doll <i>Radermachera sinica</i>	Seeds (cuttings or air layering)	Difficult to propagate.
Chinese Evergreen <i>Aglaonema modestum</i>	Stem cuttings, offsets, layering, and seeds	Cuttings are easier than layering or seeds.
Christmas Cactus <i>Schlumbergera X Zygocactus</i>	Leaf petiole, cuttings	Easy.*
Coleus <i>Coleus blumei</i>	Tip cuttings, seeds	Easy.* Cuttings root best with rooting powder.
Creeping Charlie <i>Plectranthus purpuratus</i>	Cuttings	Easy.*
Croton <i>Codiaeum variegatum</i>	Tip cuttings from side shoots, seeds, or air layering	Avoid water stress. Use rooting powder or root in water. Change water once a week or more often.
Crown of Thorns <i>Euphorbia splendens</i>	Stem cuttings	Easy.* Do not overwater to prevent stem rot.
Cyclamen <i>Cyclamen persicum</i>	Seeds under glass or bulbs	Difficult to propagate.
Dieffenbachia (Dumb Cane) <i>Dieffenbachia picta</i>	Stem cuttings, air layering	Easy.* Wash hands after making cuttings. Do not touch eyes and mouth before washing hands. Wear gloves.
Dracaena <i>Dracaena deremensis</i> <i>Dracaena fragrans massangeana</i> <i>Dracaena marginata</i>	Air layering Tips and stems cuttings	Easy.*
Echeveria <i>Echeveria spp.</i>	Root young plants	Easy.*

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English Ivy <i>Hedera helix</i>	Stem cuttings	Easy.* Use a rooting powder.
False Aralia <i>Dizygotheca elegantissima</i>	Seeds, stem cuttings or air layering	Many plants can be rooted in one pot.
Fiddleleaf Fig <i>Ficus lyrata</i>	Air layering and stem cuttings	Air layering is best.
Geranium <i>Pelargonium spp.</i>	Stem cuttings	Easy.*
Gloxinia <i>Sinningia speciosa</i>	Tubers	Easy.*
Gold Dust Plant <i>Aucuba japonica</i>	Stem cuttings, layering	Grows best in partial shade.
Grape Ivy <i>Cissus rhombifolia</i>	Stem cuttings	Allow media to dry between waterings.
Hoya or Wax Plant <i>Hoya carnosa</i>	Stem cuttings	Difficult, but possible.
Jade Plant <i>Crassula argentea</i>	Stem cuttings and leaf petiole	Sandy soil or light well-drained media.
Kalanchoe <i>Kalanchoe blossfeldiana</i>	Seeds, stem cuttings, leaf blade	Leaf blade easiest.
Moses in the Cradle <i>Rhoeo spathacea</i>	Tip cuttings Root offsets	Careless overwatering or underwatering results in dead leaf tips.
Nerve Plant-Fittonias <i>Fittonia spp.</i>	Root tip cuttings	Avoid poorly drained media.
Norfolk Island Pine <i>Araucaria heterophylla</i>	Seeds, stem cuttings, air layering	Not easy to propagate. Seeds hard to find. Buy small plants.
Palm, Areca <i>Chrysalidocarpus lutescens</i>	Root divisions or small plants	Leaf tips die back if you let the media dry out too much between waterings.
Palm, Kentia <i>Howeia fosteriana</i>	Seeds (hard to find) or small plants	Easiest of all palm varieties to grow. Use only fresh seeds.
Palm, Parlour Palm or Neantha Bella <i>Chamaedorea elegans</i>	Seeds or small plants	Suffers in drafts.
Peperomia <i>Peperomia spp.</i>	Stem cuttings or division	Easy.*
Persian Violet <i>Exacum affine</i>	Cuttings from old plant	Keep in cool location.
Philodendron <i>Philodendron cordatum</i>	Air layering	Easy.*
Philodendron, Heart Leaf <i>Philodendron scandens oxycardium</i>	Tip cuttings	Easy.*
Peperomia <i>Peperomia spp.</i>	Stem cuttings or division	Easy.*
Persian Violet <i>Exacum affine</i>	Cuttings from old plant	Keep in cool location.
Philodendron <i>Philodendron cordatum</i>	Air layering	Easy.*
Philodendron, Heart Leaf <i>Philodendron scandens oxycardium</i>	Tip cuttings	Easy.*
Philodendron, Split Leaf <i>Monstera deliciosa</i>	Air layering	Easy.*

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Poinsettia <i>Euphorbia pulcherrima</i>	Stem cuttings	Easy.* Avoid getting milky sap on skin.
Pothos-Devil's Ivy <i>Scindapsus aureus</i>	Cuttings	Very easy* in water or media.
Prayer Plant <i>Maranta leuconeura</i>	Stem cuttings or division	Leaves fold upward at night.
Rubber Plant <i>Ficus elastica</i>	Air layering or stem cuttings	Easy* either way.
Schefflera, Umbrella tree <i>Brassaia actinophylla</i> <i>Schefflera arboricola</i>	Seeds, stem cuttings, air layering	Air layering works best if plant is tall.
Snake Plant <i>Sansevieria trifasciata</i>	Leaf blade or division	Easy.*
Spatheflower-Peace Lily <i>Spathiphyllum spp.</i>	Division or seed	Roots are tender and can be burned by fertilizer.
Spider Plant, Varigated <i>Chlorophytum spp.</i>	Divisions, runners, or plantlets	Runners or plantlets are easy to grow.
Succulents <i>Crassula spp.</i> (Various varieties)	Seeds, stem cuttings, leaf blade	Leaf blade easiest.
Thanksgiving Cactus <i>Zygocactus X Schlumbergera</i>	Cuttings	Easy.*
Ti Plant or Cordyline <i>Cordyline teminalis</i>	Stem cuttings and air layering	Air layering is the best method if plants are leggy.
Purple Velvet Plant <i>Gynura aurantiaca</i>	Cuttings	Yellow flowers have an unpleasant smell.
Wandering Jew <i>Tradescantia spp.</i>	Stem cuttings	Easy.* Root in water or use rooting powder for soil methods.
Weeping Fig <i>Ficus benjamina</i>	Stem cuttings and air layering	Sensitive to changes.
Yucca <i>Yucca spp.</i>	Cane cutting or by removing plantlets as they form	Easy.*

* Easy means that by following the methods and care, they are not difficult to grow.

Botanical name listed under common name.

For More Information:

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