

## PLANT PROPAGATION

What is plant propagation? It is simply making new plants from old. You can do this in many ways: seeds, cuttings, layering, and more. By plant propagation, we get free plants, gain experience with the nature of plants, and study a plant's reproduction techniques. It can be fun as well.

The first thing you need is a place to put your plants. You will need a cold frame, which is an enclosed out-door structure made of any suitable material which will yet light through, but can be used to when the weather is cold to protect young plants. You also need a lining-out bed to grow the plants to transplant size. This bed will allow the young plants to grow strong and properly. Also, any weak plants can be weeded out.

The soil medium used in the cold frame should be a very light, airy mix which will drain well; also when the seedlings are taken out you avoid ripping off the tender roots. The mix should have some water retaining qualities, however, so that you do not have constantly watering it. A good general soil medium is 1/3 topsoil (sterilized soil is best), 1/3 peat moss, 1/3 sand, perlite, or vermiculite. Some plants may require a different medium to obtain optimum – results. Adjust mixture, as recommended by the attached “Propagation Chart”, to suit plant requirements.

The type of plant you would like to propagate often determines the type of propagation method you use and the time of year to do it.

Always select cuttings or seeds from only, healthy plants.



We will concern ourselves with only a few types of propagation methods. A popular and easy method is by taking cuttings. You can achieve good results this way. There are two basic types of cuttings: softwood and hardwood cuttings. Softwood cuttings are simply this year's growth, and hardwood cuttings are the previous year's growth. To determine a year's growth, look closely at the branch. This year's growth may be a richer color, it may be tender and succulent, and there will be tiny wrinkles or creases between each year's growth. The length of the cuttings varies between one and ten inches, but the exact length will be left up to the judgment of the propagator. When making cuttings, the length should be uniform, simply because it is neat. The width of the stem should generally be as thick as a pencil. On many plants the base of the cutting is to be wounded. Wounding is cutting off a very thin layer of the bark to expose the cambium or inner bark. This encourages a callous to form, and roots will grow from this area. In many cases sufficient wounding is obtained by stripping off the lower leaves. When making cuttings, you should always have at least one node below the surface of the medium. The roots will also come out of the node. Just before you insert your cuttings it is a good idea to dip them in a rooting hormone.