

PROPAGATING HOUSEPLANTS FROM STEM CUTTINGS

The most common method for propagating a new houseplant is by shoot or stem cuttings. Most any houseplant with a stem-like growth habit may be propagated by this method. This includes vining plants such as lip stick vine, wandering Jew, and ivies. Upright plants such as begonias, bloodleaf, pileas, and some peperomias are also propagated by shoot cuttings. Cut 2-3-inch-long shoot cuttings from donor plants. Longer cuttings root more slowly and may become too leggy. Always take cuttings with a sharp knife as ragged edges root slowly. The terminal shoot, which is the end portion of the stem, is not the only part of a plant that will root. Any portion of the stem that has leaves on it will root, although it may take longer than the terminal shoot. The key thing to remember is that you must place the 'bottom' into the rooting medium. If the 'top' end is placed in the soil, the cutting will not root and will die. In trailing plants, as with others, the bottom end is that part closest to the pot. The planting medium should be vermiculite, perlite, or another soilless mix.

Shoot cuttings should have at least 2 node areas. These are the places from which leaves grow. Pull the leaf away from these areas and insert the cutting into moist growing medium. Make sure the node is beneath the moist soil at all times. Although some plants, such as wandering Jew, root all up and down the stem, many others will root only at the node area.

Stem cuttings take from one to several weeks to root, depending upon the plant species. After a period of time, gently tug the cuttings to see if they have rooted. Well rooted plants will resist a slight pull. If the cuttings begin to move, they are not well rooted and should be allowed to stay longer in the rooting medium. When transplanting cuttings, scoop them out with a spoon to avoid damaging the tender new roots.

MSU Master Gardener Training Manual, Indoor Plants, P. 20

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