

PROPAGATING HOUSEPLANTS FROM LEAF CUTTINGS

Leaf petiole cuttings are a popular way to propagate many plants. The petiole is the leaf's stem. Leaf petiole cuttings are usually made from non-branching houseplants. These include begonias, jade plants, African violets, piggyback plants, peperomias and many kinds of succulents.

To take the cutting, select a newer medium-sized leaf and cut it from the donor plant with a sharp knife. Leave a one to one-and-a-half-inch long petiole on the leaf. Longer petioles will not root as quickly. Insert most of the petiole into the rooting medium. The planting medium should be vermiculite, perlite, or another soilless mix. New plants, each generated from a single plant cell, will appear in 1-4 weeks. Separate these plantlets from the petiole when they are about 1-2 inches tall and have developed a good root system.

Two other propagation methods which will test your skills are leaf vein cuttings and leaf piece cuttings. Both are common methods for propagating large leafed plants with prominent veins, such as Begonias.

For a leaf vein cutting, remove a single mature leaf from the donor plant with a sharp knife. Cut off the petiole. Next slash the main veins of the leaf. Dip the cut vein areas into rooting hormone. Place the leaf, bottom side down, on moist rooting soil. Pin it in place with toothpicks, making sure the cut veins are in contact with the soil. Tiny plants will appear along the veins in a few weeks.

For leaf piece cuttings, take a mature leaf and cut it into pieces, making sure each piece has a segment of the large vein. Lay these pieces on top of or insert them into the rooting medium. Make sure the basal part of the vein (the section that was closest to the petiole) is in contact with the soil. Plantlets will form at the basal cut.

Moisture levels are very critical with leaf vein and leaf piece cuttings. If the soil is not sterile and not kept evenly moist at all times, failure is highly likely.

The **Master Gardener Hotline** is open from April to October, Monday through Friday. Lines are available 9:00 am to noon and 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm at 888-678-3464

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