



## **NEW PLANTS FROM HARDWOOD CUTTINGS**

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Making new plants from cuttings is one of the most satisfying projects a gardener can do. There is nothing more exciting than seeing a woody, dead-looking stick grow into a mature, beautiful plant. Right now is the perfect time to begin propagating plants from hardwood cuttings – propagation success occurs more easily because this type of cutting is usually impervious to damage due to the "mother" plant being dormant.

Before selecting which plant in a landscape to take hardwood cuttings from, be careful to identify whether or not it is a patented plant. If it is, do not try to propagate it – it is illegal to do so, even in one's own garden. Patented plants can be identified by a PP number (plant patent number) on the tag or the designation PPAF after its name (plant patent applied for). These plants have extra fees attached to them, which are paid to the specific plant breeder; that is why they are more expensive to buy than non-patented plants.

It is best to gather together the necessary materials before starting to take cuttings. These include pruning shears (bypass pruners are best) that have sharp blades, a rooting hormone compound, whatever propagation container that will be used (and already filled with the appropriate growing medium) and some type of labeling material; cut-up vinyl window blinds are ideal and these can often be found in thrift stores. Coarse sand works very well as a growing medium as does a mixture of perlite, vermiculite and compost. A very few easily propagated plants will even grow when stuck straight into garden soil, but this is not recommended as a general rule because possible soil pathogens could infect the cutting.

Ideally, even hardwood should be placed into the growing medium as soon after cutting as possible. Choose a healthy stem that has no signs of fungus or insect damage; it should be approximately the diameter of a pencil. Cut just below a node of the past season's growth. Even though the plant is dormant, identifying recent growth will still be easy because this part of the stem will be a bit greener than older growth. Depending on the plant, more than one cutting may be possible from one branch, but each cutting should have two nodes stuck below the surface of the growing medium for best success. Make a straight cut at the bottom below a node and the top cut slanted just above a node; this will help identify which direction to insert the cutting into the growing medium.

Most cuttings are more successful if dipped into rooting hormone first (either liquid or powder; following the mixing directions on the container). Make holes in the growing medium with a pencil before sticking the cuttings so the rooting hormone will not be rubbed off, stick the cutting with two nodes below the surface and water enough so that the growing medium closes around the cutting. Some plants will root faster if placed on a heating mat, but most hardwood cuttings can be left outside in whatever container is used until spring when growth should begin. Roots will begin to form when the plant normally breaks dormancy and green growth is noticed; when this occurs, tug on the stem gently and if it stays put, roots have formed. At this point, feed with a dilute mixture of fish emulsion and when a good root system is established (after a few weeks in spring), the new plant can be placed out into the garden. At this point, sit back and enjoy watching the new plant flourish, knowing that it was grown by your own hand and for virtually no cost.

Join Master Gardener Steve Savage on Saturday, February 2<sup>nd</sup> for the Weather and Climate class. Steve will present critical climatic factors that affect your garden and dictate suitability of planting in your location; micro-climates and frost dates will also be discussed. There is no charge for this three-hour event. It starts at 9:00 a.m. and is held in the Veterans Memorial Building, 130 Placerville Dr. in Placerville. Plant propagation will be covered at the following Saturday's class, February 9<sup>th</sup>.

Master Gardeners are available to answer home gardening questions Tuesday through Friday, 9 a.m. to noon, by calling (530) 621-5512. Walk-ins are welcome. The office is located at 311 Fair Lane in Placerville. For more information about our public education classes and activities, go to our Master Gardener website at [http://ucanr.edu/sites/EDC\\_Master\\_Gardeners/](http://ucanr.edu/sites/EDC_Master_Gardeners/). Sign up to receive our online notices and e-newsletter at <http://ucanr.edu/mgenews/>. You can also find us on Facebook.