

Tips from the Botanicus Plant Experts! Spring 2024

How do I root indoor tropical plant cuttings in soil?

Rooting cutting directly in soil is easy and fun. Start with soil for indoor plants like Miracle-Gro or Osmocote indoor plant potting soil (peat moss and perlite-based mix). The mix could contain starter fertilizer and/ or soil moist. Take some grow pots usually 4" or 6" and fill with dry soil. Soak the potting soil with warm water and drain the excess off. Now loosen the soil up with your fingers and poke some holes for your cuttings.

What plants can be rooted or propagated?

Vegetative plants: vines- philodendron, pothos, ivy, nephthytis vines are cut into 2-3 eye and vines sections. That is 2 internodes, one at the bottom can root, and the one at the top can root and sprout a new vine. Place many "eyes" (10 to 15) in a 6" pot in a vertical position just at the soil surface. Some will root and some may not but you will still have a few to make a full plant. This method can be used for any vining plants.

Vegetative stem plants: Chinese evergreen (aglaonema), Dracaena all varieties, pleomele, cordyline

Vegetative stem plants can be trimmed above any internode (that's the rim on the stem). The best place is at least 2 to 3" above the soil on the existing plant or 2" to 3" above the original sprout on a dracaena and the original plant can sprout a side stem. You can take one or more top cuts at a time depending on how full the original plant is. As soon as you trim the top off, you will want to strip at *least half* the leaves and up to two thirds of the leaves off the stem. This will help the plant so it does not lose too much moisture until it can root and pick up water through its newly grown roots. Now you can place it directly in a grower pot of soil.

Woody plants: Schefflera, Arborescens, Ficus, Aralia

Woody stem plants can be rooted directly in soil. Straw to pencil thickness is usually best and 6" to 12" in length. Some trimmings will be too small and some too thick. You can experiment with different sizes if you have a lot of trimmings. Strip most of the leaves off the bottom half as with the vegetative cuttings. Some woody plants like Aralia can be rooted from thicker stems that do not have any leaves. The stem has enough energy stored to root and then sprout leaves. If you have very large stems to trim off, you can cut them into sections and place many in a nursery pot to root and sprout.

Plants to divide- Aspidistra, Sansevieria

These plants are really easy to divide. You simply remove from the existing planter and take a sharp knife to the root ball. You can gently separate sections like cutting a pie. Take your new sections and simply repot into the center of another planter with fresh soil around the root ball and water in immediately.

Plants to air layer or pre-notch: Great for Ficus, Schefflera, Aralia, Dracaena, rosette philodendron

This is a great method to have large old plants get a new life! An old schefflera or ficus tree can be notched anywhere on the stem above a potential internode sprout. A large old tree can have multiple notches put on the stem in various places from top to base. The notch or pre-notch is a pie shape cut out, horizontally, just above the potential new sprout(bud). Cut in one third into the stem through the cambium layer. The lower sprout should grow within 4 to 6 weeks in spring. When it is a good size you can cut off the top... and root in soil, throw it out or try an air layer to develop roots first. Air Layer with moist soil and a plastic bag or foil cover to grow roots on the stem before cutting off. You may need to add more moisture to the bag soil if it dries out before a full root system is seen.

Cacti and succulents can make roots from a leaf or any part of the stem. They root best if left out to dry in the air and are allowed to make air roots and then placed in soil or placed in dry soil.

What Plants usually only grow from seeds, spore, or tissue culture?

Bromeliads, Orchids, Palms, some Cacti, Anthurium, Ferns, Spathiphyllum



What are ideal rooting conditions?

Spring to summer is the best time to experiment with your cutting and propagation skills on tropical house plant varieties. The plants we grow indoors are usually from the tropics and used to warm weather. The ideal rooting temperatures are between 75 to 85 degrees. The plants start to grow with longer day length in the spring and warmer soil temperatures. Ideal lighting for your cuttings is a bright window without much direct sun. The foliage needs to photosynthesize but the plant needs to grow roots to pick up moisture. North window or just back or to the side of East, West, South or behind some other plants is a good place.

How do I know when it rooted?

When your plant is rooted, it will start to grow new leaves. Now you can check for soil moisture more often and drench when starting to dry. You can add more fertilizer as the foliage fills in.

Can I root them in water?

Many plants root quickly and easily in water. If you want them to eventually be in soil, as soon as they make roots gently put them in moist, fluffed up soil, so they are not shocked by the change. Cuttings left in water for extended periods of time will have trouble transitioning to soil roots.

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