

House Plant Propagation

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Have you ever had plant envy? This happens when you visit a neighbor's garden or view a friend's houseplant collection and you are determined to

have an identical plant of your own. That is easily accomplished via vegetative plant propagation: using a part of a parent plant to regenerate or reproduce a new plant. Plant propagation techniques are fun, easy, cheap and have a high degree of success with house plants.

There are several techniques for propagating household plants: cutting, layering, division; all of which take a vegetative part of the parent plant to reproduce the child plant. Note that separation and grafting are additional propagation techniques, but they are more suitable for outside plants such as trees, shrubs, bulb and tuber plants.

Most plants can be propagated using more than one technique. However, specific techniques are more suitable for certain plants than others. For example, plants with flexible stems or vine plants (e.g. philodendron, pothos) propagate very well using the layering technique, while plants that have multiple stems emerging from the ground (e.g. peace lily, Boston fern) propagate very well using the division technique.

Propagation Techniques:

Cutting a vegetative plant part is severed from the parent plant. The child plant part may be a whole leaf cutting, a leaf section cutting, a stem cutting (tip or lower stem portion), or a plant offshoot cutting. Cutting is the most common technique for propagating household plants and is suitable for many plants including geranium, coleus, pothos, jade, rubber plant, dracaena, African violet, etc.

There are various types of cutting:

- Wholeleaf or leaf blade cuttings are most successful with household succulent plants such as jade, sedum, cactus, snake plant, etc. Once the leaf is placed in the soil, within 7-10 days, plantlets or tiny plants will form. African violet is another favorite household plant that propagates well with a whole leaf part, but should also include the petiole, slender stem that supports the leaf, along with the leaf.



- Leaf section cuttings include cutting portions of the leaf for planting or, in the case of thin broad leaf plants such as rex begonia, making thin slices over the leaf veins for planting.
- Offshoot cuttings are tiny clones of the plant that eventually separate from the parent plant. Be sure to include the offshoot node to encourage root formation. The offshoots may be planted in water or a soil medium. Spider plants, strawberry begonia, aloe vera are household plants that produce offshoots.





- Stem cuttings are the most common and easy

way to propagate house plants. Take a 3-6 inch cutting of the stem. Look for a stem with a node - a bump along the stem where a leaf or flower bud attaches. This point is where new roots will emerge. Plants that propagate well with stem cuttings include jade, arrowhead plant, African violet, begonia, Christmas cactus, croton, etc. Most herbs will also propagate successfully via stem cuttings.



Division This method involves cutting a plant into segments, each of which must have a bud and some root.

- Plants that have multiple stems emerging from the base are most suitable for the division method and include snake plant, scillia, Boston fern, prayer plant, etc.
- Simply remove the mother plant from its container and separate or divide it by pulling or cutting it apart. Each division should have some roots attached. Repot all new plants.



Layering plants that root or branch while still attached to the parent plant. New roots will generate from the planted portion of the stem or branch.

- When sufficiently rooted, the new plant is severed and repotted.
- Household plants with flexible stems that produce stolons or runners are most suitable for the layering method and include pothos, English ivy, etc.



Propagation Tips:

- Keep the new plants in a moist and humid environment.
- The best time to propagate is during the growing season, during spring and summer.
- Be sure to use a healthy parent plant; the better the condition of the parent plant, the more likely the propagation is to succeed.
- Make sure your tools are clean - especially your pruning shears or scissors as well as the container for the baby plant.
- Propagation for many plants is best done in potting soil, but some plants can be propagated in water. Most aroid plants can successfully propagate in water as they have evolved in lowland swampy environments. These plants include pothos, philodendrons, monstera, and ZZ plants.
- Child plant parts can also be placed directly in soil. The planting mixture should be loose and well-draining to enable plenty of oxygen movement through the mixture.
- Rooting hormones and heating mats may also be helpful.

The next time you have plant envy, just take a cutting or division of a favorite plant so you can have one of your own! Keep propagating as your plants multiply and multiply!

