

Propagating in Autumn

By Kate



September (autumn) is a good time to take cuttings and increase the stock of your favourite plants.

‘Semi-ripe’ cuttings are from this year’s growth—this means they are woody at the base and soft and green at the tips. The woody base is less likely to rot.

The growth hormone is high in autumn which helps your cuttings root and grow well.

What do I need ?

- * A sharp pair of clean secateurs or pruning knife
- * A pot filled with well drained multipurpose peat free soil (optional—perlite)
- * Dibber or pencil
- * Plant label
- * Polythene bag or plastic pop bottle
- * Warm windowsill, greenhouse or conservatory



What can I propagate now?

Half-hardy perennials or tender shrubs such as Hebes, Fuchsias, Lavender, Rosemary, Sage, Penstemons, Pelargoniums and Verbena.

Not all plants (tender shrubs or some half-hardy perennials) can survive through winter, however by taking cuttings it helps ensure you have them for the following year.

So –how do I propagate my plants?

- * Cut your plant stems in the morning to help prevent wilting
- * Choose a healthy non flowering stem and cut just above a leaf.
- * Place stems either immediately into a polythene bag or into a container of water to help reduce water loss.
- * Fill your pot with peat free compost and water before adding the cuttings, allow the excess water to drain.
- * Cut away the lower leaves, leaving two sets of leaves at the top of your cutting, nip out the growing tip.
- * Using the dibber, make a hole in the compost, insert the cutting and lightly firm into place.
- * If doing several cuttings, arrange around outside of pot, sliding the cutting between pot and compost.
- * Label with plant name.
- * Cover with either a polythene bag or pop bottle.
- * Keep the compost damp but not too wet so the cuttings do not dry out.

How do I know when they are ready?

- * Nothing much will show over winter, however if the cutting is looking healthy and new leaves are being produced then this is a positive sign.
- * In spring, lift the pot, with one hand carefully cover the soil and tip the pot over —you should start to see small white roots poking through the drainage holes. This is positive proof your cuttings have not only taken but are actively growing.
- * If you are satisfied that the cuttings have taken, tip them out carefully and pot them up individually—making sure each one is labelled and let them grow on before planting outside once the weather is warmer.

