## SOFTWOOD CUTTINGS

- These are taken in early to late spring to grow many semi-tender plants such as pelargoniums and fuchsias, herbaceous plants and some alpines. Young growth on shrubs such as *Rosmarinus* (rosemary), *Artemisia* (wormwood) and *Lavandula* (lavender) may also respond well.
- In spring, remove shoots from the parent plant once they are firm enough to handle and not too soft to lose their rigidity.
- Using a sharp knife or secateurs, prepare the cutting by making a cut at an angle of 35 degrees at the base of the chosen shoot.
- Cuttings should be 5-10cm long according to plant variety. If the leaves are alternate on the shoot, make the upper cut four leaf joints above the first cut. If the leaves are opposite, make the cut above the second pair of leaves. In both cases make cuts from the buds in the leaf joint.
- Gently remove the lower leaves. If the remaining leaves are more than 3cm long, halve them with a knife, to cut down moisture loss during the pre-rooting period.

**ROOTING:**

- Dip the bottom 3cm of the prepared cutting into water. Shake off the surplus then roll the bottom 2.5cm in rooting hormone. Insert cuttings into seed trays or pots containing sharp sand.
- Place the tray or pot into a propagator – preferably one with a heating control.
- Close all vents and shade the cover with a newspaper. After 7-10 days, open the vents and remove the shading.
- Once the cuttings make new shoots at the leaf joints, this is a good indication that rooting has taken place. Remove the tray or pot from the propagator.
- When new growth on the rooted cuttings reaches more than 3cm long, pot them into individual pots of general potting compost.
- In four to six weeks they should be large enough to plant in their final growing positions, provided all risk of frost has passed.

## SEMI-RIPE CUTTINGS

- Semi-ripe cuttings of many shrubs and climbers can be taken in late spring to midsummer. Success is not guaranteed but it's worth a try.
- The method or preparation is the same as for softwood cuttings, but use shoots from the current season's growth that have begun to firm.
- The use of a propagator is more important and the availability of controllable heat will enhance the success rate. Rooting is slower than softwood cuttings but once new growth has reached 3cm the cuttings can be potted on into individual pots.
- Grow young plants on in a frost free light-protected environment such as a greenhouse or garden frame with no additional heat. Plant out in the garden or into larger pots the following spring or autumn.

## WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Fork
- Spade
- Rake
- Watering can with fine rose
- Propagator – heated/ unheated
- Greenhouse/ garden frame
- Seed trays/ pots
- Labels

**For seeds:**

- Packaged seed
- Seed-sowing compost

**For cuttings:**

- Sharp knife
- Secateurs
- Rooting hormone
- Sharp sand
- Potting compost

For more information: **www.rhs.org.uk/advice** **www.plantforlife.info**

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THE EASY GUIDE TO

# SEEDS & CUTTINGS

## RAISING PLANTS

The great thing about gardening is that it can be as easy or hard as you want it to be. Take a trip to your garden centre or nursery, pick up some wonderful plants in flower and you can have instant colour in your beds and containers. But others like to get a little more involved in raising and nurturing plants and enjoy the thrill of watching tiny seeds evolve into beautiful border plants or being able to bulk up their existing plants by taking cuttings. This leaflet has just the information you'll need to start growing your own plants – either by sowing seeds or raising cuttings – which also have the added benefit of saving you money!

## SEED SOWING

**SOWING:**

- The plant's requirements will be shown on the seed packet and should be followed closely.
- Seed can be sown into a seed tray, or in the case of small amounts of seed, into small pots.
- Sow large seeds such as sweet peas and runner beans individually into single pots.
- Label all sowings.
- Place a good quality pre-moistened seed sowing compost into the tray or pot. Place the seed on the compost surface and push gently into the compost or cover with a little more seed sowing compost and firm it lightly. Make sure the seed is evenly distributed across the compost surface.
- Shade seed and new seedlings from strong sunlight.

**WATERING:**

- Water little and often, using a watering can with a long spout to slow down water flow and a fine rose to prevent damage and ensure even distribution of water.

**GROWING ON:**

- Once the seedlings are large enough to handle, replant them, to give more space, into trays or pots and continue to protect.
- Handle by the leaves only and not the stems.
- Do not plant in their final growing position in the garden until all fear of spring frost has passed.

## SOWING SEEDS IN THE GARDEN

- Good soil preparation is important and the soil should be dug to a depth of at least 25cm. This can be done in autumn or winter or just before sowing in spring. Water well
- It is never possible to eliminate weeds during preparation and new weeds will grow alongside the seedlings. Sow a 15cm long row of seed to help identify the plant seedlings so that any weeds can be carefully removed.
- Small seed can be evenly scattered over the surface and then lightly raked in. Larger seed can be sown in shallow trenches 0.5–1cm deep with seed evenly spaced and covered by gently raking the soil over them. Label for identification later.
- With both methods, some spacing out of the seedlings may be required to give each plant room to develop fully.

## SOWING SEEDS UNDER PROTECTION

- The use of a propagator – either heated or unheated – to help control the growing environment will be of value in raising any plants from seed, but some seeds cannot be grown without additional heat, so the range of possible plants can be extended.
- Tender plants, in particular half-hardy annuals used for summer display, require some protection in the form of a windowsill, greenhouse, garden frame, conservatory or propagator.
- The more protection a seed is given, the greater the success rate and the greater the range of plants it is possible to grow.

## GROWING FROM CUTTINGS

Cuttings fall into three main groups, but whichever method you use it is essential that cuttings are taken from healthy plants:

- **hardwood**
- **softwood**
- **semi-ripe**

## HARDWOOD CUTTINGS

- Taking hardwood cuttings is one of the easiest ways to produce new plants of *Salix* (willow), *Deutzia* and many other woody shrubs, and only needs secateurs.
- From autumn to early spring, select shoots produced the previous spring and summer. Only select strong growth and remove near its base or point of origin.
- These shoots – about the thickness of a pencil and 23–25cm long – should be cut square below a bud to form a base, at an angle of 35 degrees .

**ROOTING:**

- Treat the bottom 3cm of each cutting with rooting hormone.
- Insert the prepared cuttings into a 12–15cm trench made in well dug garden soil with a 5cm layer of sharp sand for drainage.
- Alternatively plant three or four cuttings in a pot of multi-purpose or cutting compost and place in a cold frame or sheltered part of the garden. The following autumn the rooted cuttings can be carefully planted out in their final growing positions.