

Plant Magic: How to Propagate Plants from Cuttings

"Do you not realize the whole thing is miraculous? It is exactly as though you were to cut off your wife's leg, stick it in the lawn, and be greeted on the following day by an entirely new woman, sprung from the leg, advancing across the lawn to greet you." Beverley Nichols, Down the Garden Path.

Propagating plants from cuttings is as close to magic as science gets. With a piece of an old plant, you can make a new plant. While free plants are always welcome, propagation is also great for making more of a hard-to-find cultivar or helping a sentimental plant live on.

Propagating by cutting is very easy and extremely inexpensive. Don't be afraid of failing. Taking cuttings doesn't harm your plant-- it can actually benefit it-- and you can always try again.

How do I know what plants can be propagated by cutting?

There are many different ways to propagate plants.

Geraniums, impatiens, basil, nepeta, pothos are just a few examples of plants that can be successfully propagated by stem cutting. A quick Google search will tell you how your plant in question can be most successfully propagated.

In this instructional, we'll look at a stem cutting from a scented geranium.

What You'll Need

Plant

Sharp knife, disinfected

Small pot, filled with planting medium of choice

Small greenhouse or plastic bag

Video Directions



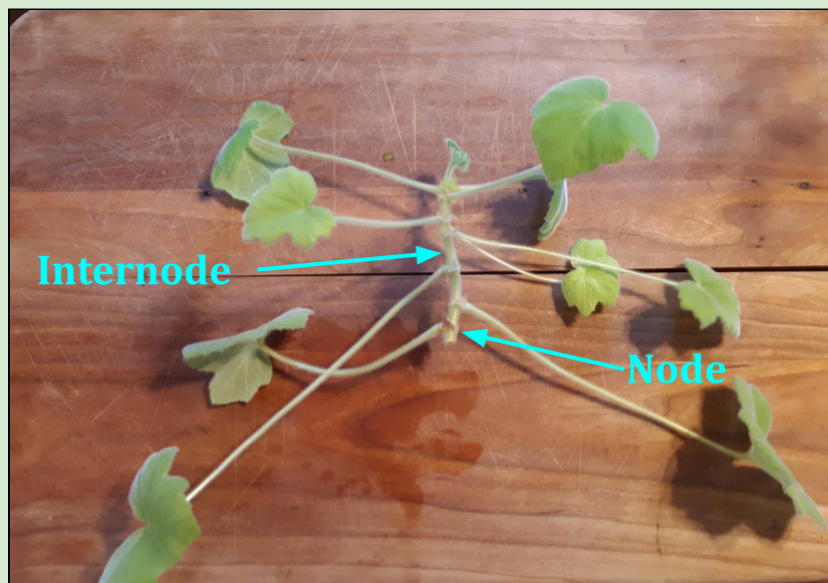
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Step By Step Directions

1. Find a nice, long green stem. This one looks good! Use a knife or clippers to cut that stem just above a leaf. In the case of this geranium, be sure to cut where it's green. Cutting will promote new, bushier growth.



2. Take a look at your stem. The areas where there are leaves are called nodes. Those spots are really important-- they have cells that create new growth; in the case of our cutting, they'll create roots. The stem part between leaves is called the internode.



3. Make sure your knife is sharp *and* disinfected. To make your cutting, cut just below an internode (i.e. just below a leaf). Then remove all the leaves except for the top two or three.



4. Fill a small, clean pot with moist growing medium. I've had great success with perlite. Use a pencil to make a deep hole and insert the cutting, making sure a few nodes are covered. (Some gardeners use rooting hormone; geraniums root very easily and do not need this). Keep the pot in a bright spot, out of direct sunlight. You'll have better success if you keep the cutting covered-- a mini greenhouse, a reused plastic bag or a clear plastic container with some holes punched in it will work perfectly.



5. Keep the cutting moist and check the bottom of the pot every few weeks for roots. When roots emerge from the bottom of the pot, the cutting can be potted in potting soil

Don't worry if your attempt is ultimately unsuccessful. Sometimes a cutting just doesn't take. The good news is that the process is pretty much free-- and your plant got a good pruning out of it. Keep trying!