

Hardwood Cuttings

Hardwood cuttings are a relatively simple way of multiplying a number of hardy plants including:

Forsythia, Buddleja, Cornus, Philadelphus, Deutzia, Ribes, Rosa, Sambucus, Salix, Gooseberries, Black & Red Currants and some climbers such as **Lonicera, Parthenocissus & Jasminum nudiflorum**.

Some evergreens can also be tried, such as **Cotoneaster, Ilex (holly), Ligustrum (privet) and Skimmia**. Evergreens are taken from side shoots of current year's wood and will need more protection than deciduous plants. Evergreens will benefit from an application of rooting hormone. Evergreens are best done in containers rather than in open ground.

*This technique is **not** a fast way to produce a plant, but is easy to do and costs very little.*

The best material to use is healthy current year's wood, which should be at least of pencil thickness. Discard the top growth of the cutting material as it will be too soft.

Taking the Hardwood cutting.

Start at the bottom of the selected plant material and locate a bud or pair of buds. Using sharp secateurs, cut directly below the bud(s). This cut should be straight across the plant material. Then, between 20cm & 30cm up from the first cut, find another bud and cut above the bud. This cut should be a slanting cut away from the bud. The base should always be straight and the top will be slanted. This stops any confusion when inserting the plant material into the soil or compost. Also the slanting top cut will shed water and help stop the top of the cutting from rotting.

Planting & Aftercare.

Hardwood cuttings are taken from autumn to late winter when the plants are dormant.

The prepared cuttings are inserted into a trench outdoors or into pots. The nursery bed should be sheltered, if at all possible, and the base of the trench should have some sharp sand or grit in the bottom to aid drainage. When planting in pots or containers a general purpose compost mixed 50-50 with grit or sharp sand can be used. Pots can be kept outside or in in a cold greenhouse.

Insert the cuttings into the trench or pot and leave the top 5cm exposed. Leave about 15cm between each cutting. If a single stalked plant is required rub out the rest of the buds leaving the top bud only intact then insert the cutting so the top is almost at soil or compost level. Label and water in. The cuttings will spend the winter developing a callus layer and then grow roots and shoots during the spring/summer. The young plants will be ready for lifting in the autumn/winter. Expect to have some losses. As a rule of thumb, for every 3 cuttings, 1 will survive although often all survive. This depends on the quality of the plant material being used, the sharpness of the tools being used and not letting the cutting material dry out at all prior to inserting in the soil/compost.

If outdoor conditions are unsuitable ie. very heavy soil or very cold conditions, or for slow rooting plants, bundles of 5 to 10 cuttings can be temporarily planted in a frame or pot filled with moist sand until the spring. Some *Cornus* and *Laburnum* are examples of hardwood cuttings which may take longer to root.

In early spring, before the buds break, make a trench 12.5cm (5in) deep and set the cuttings out as described above.