

Autumn HOME IMPROVEMENT

Propagating plants is easier than you think

By Roger Marshall

If you go to a nursery, you'll see a huge selection of plants with rows of identical plants of one kind or another. Most of these plants were propagated from older identical plants. You, too, can propagate plants to increase your stock of favorites or to get enough plants to make a hedge or border.

Depending on the plants that you want to clone, propagation is relatively easy. For example, I have a huge jade plant. All that is required to increase the number of plants is to take a small twig of the mother plant, push it into the ground and let it grow. There are a number of other plants that are as easy to grow as the jade plant. For example, Christmas cactuses can be propagated by breaking a small "leaf" off the mother plant at the division and pushing it into potting soil. Keep the mini leaf moist and it will usually grow. Many succulents are that easy to propagate, and most can be propagated at any

time of the year.

Other plants may be more difficult to clone or may need to be done at certain times of the year for best results. They also may require different techniques to clone them successfully. First, let's look at various ways to propagate plants, and then we'll look at the times of year to do the work. Finally, we'll cover some plants that can be propagated.

Propagation techniques

There are three major methods of propagating plants. The first is by sowing seeds. The second is by cuttings, and the third is by dividing the roots. In each of these methods, there are special techniques that make it easier to propagate certain plants.

Growing seeds is a method that we are all familiar with. We simply sprinkle seeds in a pot or growing bed and wait to see what comes up. But some seeds require stratification – that is, they need to be put in a cold refrigerator for six or eight

weeks and then in a warm spot, sometimes several times, before they will germinate. Other seeds require lots of light, mimicking

summer days, before they will germinate. Often these seeds can be tricked into germinating by putting them under grow lights for up to 16

hours a day.

Taking cuttings is another relatively easy method. Cuttings are See "Propagating" on page 20

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