



SOUTH CAROLINA FAMILY AND COMMUNITY LEADERS

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SCFCL website: <http://www.scfcl.com>

Leader Training Guide

Yard of the Month!

How to have a beautiful yard without spending a dime.

Objectives: To explain how to multiply plants and shrubs with propagation.

Lesson Overview/Introduction: There are many plants and shrubs that are easily increased by division, by taking cuttings and other methods of rooting. This is a guide to identifying those plants that respond best to easy propagation methods and can add beauty to home landscapes.

Lesson: Does your yard look like it belongs on the cover of a magazine? Or does it have some bare spots, dead shrubs and empty flower beds? You can change all that with easy plant propagation and no big landscaping bills!

Plant propagation can be achieved by different methods including seeding, dividing and rooting stem cuttings. Perennial plants are considered by many to be the best value for home landscapes. They are available everywhere in nurseries and home improvement stores and are great for propagating to multiply plants.

Perennials are easily started from seeds harvested from older plants. Be prepared however, to wait for them to flower, as it may take a couple of years to grow a mature, blooming plant.

Rooting and division, referred to as vegetative propagation are the quickest ways to produce more plants.

Rooting stem cuttings, is a little quicker than seeding, but will still take time to produce a mature plant. Rooting stem cuttings does not disturb the mother plant's roots but, like division, will produce a plant with all the traits of the mother plant. Take stem cuttings during the spring or early summer. Cut stems that are mature but not hard and woody, about 4 to 6 inches long. Pinch off any soft tips or flower

buds. This forces the cutting to concentrate energy on producing roots. Remove any lower leaves that will be in the rooting medium. A few leaves on the rest of the stem can be left to provide energy for growth. Most cuttings root better in pots than in garden soil. You can use professional mixes or make your own by combining peat moss, sand and vermiculite. These mixtures hold moisture while allowing good drainage. You might want to use a root stimulating compound to increase root production. They can be found in garden centers. Make holes in the rooting medium and insert the treated cutting firming the medium around the cutting. Then water it well. You can make a miniature greenhouse by cutting the bottom off a large drink bottle and placing it over the cutting, or by draping clear plastic film over a frame. Place in a well lighted location, avoiding direct sunlight that might "cook" the cuttings. Water as needed. You will see roots in three to four weeks when new leaves begin to form. Remove the bottle or plastic film and water regularly until the cuttings are established and can be transplanted into pots or prepared, protected beds.

Perennials that are easily propagated by stem cuttings are: Salvia, Sedum, Mexican Petunia, Lavender, Rosemary, Clematis, Balloon Flower, Bleeding Heart and English Ivy.

The fastest way is division of older plants. Propagation by division will sometimes scare novice gardeners, but can be easily mastered. Division can be by dividing roots and crowns of plants or by separating bulbs. The best time to divide perennials is when they are dormant. If they bloom in the spring, divide them in the fall, fall bloomers should be divided in the spring. Try to avoid dividing plants in full bloom. Some perennials need dividing more often, every few years, to keep them from overcrowding and producing less blooms. Perennial plants that are shallow rooted or have long fibrous roots such as daylilies, can be pulled apart by hand. Plants with thick roots may need to be pulled apart with digging forks or cut with a sharp knife. Keep only those plants with good strong roots and some intact leaves. If a plant has a taproot it is better to leave it where it is growing.

Perennials that are best propagated by division are: Ajuga, Artemisia, Cast-Iron Plant, Daisies and Mums, Daylily, Phlox and Yarrow.

Perennials that are Bulbs, Corms, Tubers and Rhizomes and need to be divided are: Cannas, Crinum, Elephant's Ear, Ginger Lily, Iris, Lily, Hosta and Spider Lily.

The backbones of every garden are shrubs and trees. Surprisingly, many shrubs and trees can be propagated by the home gardener. It takes a little time, a little

patience and a little work but the results are satisfying. Many offer attractive blooms and fragrance and others have colorful leaves and bark.

Shrubs that can be propagated by stem cuttings are: Abelia, Althea or Rose-of-Sharon, Azalea, Beauty Berry, Boxwood, Camellia, Cleyera, Elaeagnus, Euonymus, Flowering Quince, Forsythia, Holly, Hydrangea and Spirea. Stem cuttings from shrubs are usually done in summer to fall.

Trees that are suitable for stem cuttings are: Crape Myrtle, Ginkgo and Chaste Tree. Stem cuttings from trees are best taken in late fall to early winter.

If you are on a budget and have a reasonably green thumb you can replenish an older landscape by multiplying plants that you already own. Southern gardeners are often blessed with neighbors, friends and family members who are willing to share cuttings and plant divisions. Accept their offers! Plants grown from propagation are already acclimated to local soil and temperatures and are a lot more economical than buying new plants.

Lesson Summary: If you enjoy gardening and want to save money in your yard, consider trying plant propagation. A few tools and supplies are all you need to have a beautiful lush landscape.

Suggested Activities: Have club members bring stem cuttings and plant divisions to share or plan visits to gardens whose owners are willing to share cuttings. Have Master Gardeners come to a meeting and share propagation techniques.

Suggested Materials: Different types of plant cuttings

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Sources/References:

“Tough Plants for Southern Gardens” by Felder Rushing

“South Carolina Gardener’s Guide” by Jim Wilson

