

Propagating Annuals from Cuttings

Late summer or early fall is an ideal time to take cuttings from annuals such as geraniums, coleus and impatiens, potting them up for winter bloom indoors or to hold them over for the following spring. The following steps will help ensure success.

1. Clip off any flowers or flower buds on the plant. This is done to focus the plant's energy into developing new roots on the stem cutting.
2. Select healthy stem cuttings (preferably healthy growing tips or side shoots) that are 2 to 6 inches long. Strip off any bottom leaves where the stem will be inserted in the rooting medium (either potting soil or water). Dip the cut end of the stem into a rooting hormone powder to encourage rapid root growth.
3. Insert the cutting in potting soil (not a soilless seedstarting mix) and water the container. Cover the flat or pot with a clear plastic bag to create a moist, humid atmosphere. Don't let the plant leaves touch the side of the bag because this will cause rot.
4. New roots should develop in one to three weeks. To test, gently tug on the cutting. Pot up the new plants in 4- to 6-inch containers and keep out of direct sunlight for three days. After this time, place the plants in a sunny location.
5. An alternative method of rooting plants, such as begonias, coleus or geraniums, is to place the stem cuttings in a glass of water to develop roots. Change water every few days until plants develop roots, and add a little soil to the jar after new roots appear. Plant rooted cuttings in 4- to 6-inch containers filled with potting soil.
6. Once the new plant is well established, pinch off the stem tip to encourage fuller growth and more abundant flowers.