

From the Sept., 2002 issue of Miriam Wilkins' "Old Roser's Digest" comes a bouquet of methods of . . .

Rooting Rose Cuttings

Reprinted From "Gold Coast Roses," October, 2002

* **First Method:** Take a 12" stem with the just-bloomed rose removed. We are told to use softwood cuttings in summer, hardwood in winter. The cutting should have 4 to 6 leaf sets.

Remove all but the top two leaf sets. Cut the stem just ABOVE the top leaf set, and just BELOW the bottom eye. For best results, take the cutting from right where the stem joins the cane, as the cells there are different — but this isn't always possible. With a razor blade or sharp knife, cut into the bottom of the stem, quartering it. Go up at least a half-inch. Some shave off bark for an inch on either side of the cutting, near the bottom. You can dip the cane in rooting hormone. Make a hole in the medium, so the hormone isn't wiped away. Insert cutting.

The medium varies. Old-timers recommend sticking the cutting into the soil near the "mother plant." Any friable soil will do, and you can use very coarse builder's sand. Potting soil is adequate. Some spray the bed with a fungicide to prevent mildew and blackspot. Do not overwater, as the cuttings may rot. You can put a large glass container over the cutting, or add a plastic cover.

* **A far-out method worked here.** Prepare a half-dozen cuttings. Use no rooting hormone. Place the cuttings in a zip-top bag, with wet newspapers squeezed into balls. (Use 3 or 4 balls.) Use NO medium. Flatten the bag, to remove most of the air, then seal it. Keep in refrigerator until the slips appear to callus. This might take a month. When callus, or white roots form, remove the cuttings and plant in good soil, or kitty litter.

* **The journal of England's Royal Horticultural Society** wrote up a method: Take cuttings from healthy young bushes. Here, July or September would be fine. Prepare as usual. The rooting medium is sand, loam, and peat moss, in proportions of 3-1-1. Place a 4" pot inside a 6" pot. Add pebbles or broken clay pot parts for one inch under the 4-in. pot. There will be 1 in of space all around the outside of the smaller pot. Fill **that** space with the medium, and wet well. Insert cuttings in this space. Place in a cool, shady spot, or in a plastic bag. Roots should form in 6 to 8 weeks. When cuttings are well-rooted, remove the inner pot, and plant in the ground.

* **The simplest method**, which has met with mixed success, is to cut a rose in full and glorious bloom. Leave it in water, to enjoy it. When the bloom fades, cut it off, and leave the stem in the water. This worked for our grandmothers.

If you are serious about increasing your roses, set up a misting system. It's best to use a raised bed, or a table with low sides, so that the medium stays in place. The mist must be timed so that the cuttings never dry out. Ralph Moore uses a garden hose, with the proper attachment to provide a mist, not a deluge. It is outside, and on a timer. A greenhouse, or some protective covering, helps.

Many books on roses offer information on rooting cuttings. Ortho and Sunset include it, along with info on budding and germinating rose seed. This Fall, collect a few hips, remove the seeds from the casing, put them in damp peat moss. Keep them in the refrigerator until Spring, and plant in light soil. A flat is best, kept in a shady spot. Keep the soil damp.

Some roses (‘**Secret Garden Musk Climber**’ is a good example) are notoriously difficult to root from cuttings. We have speculated that LAYERING might be a better method for such roses . . .

Layering Produces Rooted Plants

You need a pliant cane to root a portion of it in the ground. Bend it over. Cut one third to one half of the way through the cane, just below a bud eye. If the cut tends to shut, insert a small pebble, bean, or sliver of wood.

Have the earth prepared at the spot you intend to use. Pull the cane down, and bury the cut portion in the soil, so that it is well-covered. Say, four inches of soil. Any less, and it will dry out. The end of the cane will be above the soil; you may want to tie it to a support. Place a rock, or a brick over the covered portion, to hold it under the soil. Water regularly enough to be sure the soil does not dry out. Wait a month or two, before checking for roots.

When roots have formed, cut off the piece with roots included. You may need to cut the remaining portion of the cane back to a bud eye, so that it will not die back.

AIR LAYERING

If the rosebush isn’t pliant, you can AIR LAYER. This time, just below a node, cut into the “bark” skinning off about a third of an inch. (The branch will still be able to remain upright.) Wrap the area with soaked sphagnum moss (wear gloves), to form a nice fat “ball” approximately 2 inches in diameter, and three inches up and down. Be certain that the moss is soaking wet.

Now, wrap the ball of moss securely with plastic wrap, going around 3 or 4 times, so that it will be air tight. Tie it at the top and bottom. The moss **MUST** stay wet, in order for roots to form. Check it periodically, and if it looks dry, open the top, and add water, re-tying securely. If roots don’t form, but the cut forms callus, you can cut the cane below the callus, and treat it like any cutting — but this one will be more likely to root. Some gardeners like to add a layer of Aluminum foil, to be sure no air gets in.

When roots have formed, cut the new little plant off, and re-cut the remaining cane just above a bud eye.

From “Old Roser’s Digest,” Miriam Wilkins, September, 2002

