**Propagate Your Favorite Plants  
With Root Cuttings**  
  
  
Four simple steps to propagate more trees, shrubs and perennials

Taking root cuttings is one of the most reliable and economical ways to produce many perennial and woody plants.  
  
It's also pathetically easy, so if you've ever had problems propagating some of your favorite plants, this may be the way for you to go.  
  
It's best done during the plant's dormant season usually between November and February, and is such a straightforward process, you can do it in four steps. How's that for easy?  
  
At the end of the article we have listed many plants that do well with root cuttings, but if you're careful, test doing some plants that are not on the list and see how you do.  
  
Just keep in mind that some plants like roses and fruit trees are grafted, so if you take root cuttings you will be propagating the root stock, and not the grafted variety that you enjoy above the grafted root stock.

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| **Step 1 Carefully Uncover The Roots**  The best time to take root cuttings is when the plants are dormant which is usually between November and February. At this time, there is a large amount of stored energy in the roots, and there is less stress on the parent plant because they are not actively growing and in as much need of their root system.  **For Woody Plants**  1.To take root cuttings from trees and shrubs, carefully remove dirt around the roots on one side of the plant.  2. It's best to dig fairly close to the base of the plant to make sure you find roots belonging to the plant you are working on.  3. Take a close look at the roots that you want to take cuttings from and make sure they're healthy, living roots, not dead ones that look black or dried out.  4. Choose roots that are pencil thick.  **For Perennial Plants.**  1. For perennials and smaller plants, it's usually easier to lift the entire parent plant.  2. Look for large **fleshy** roots, the thicker the better. | Carefully Uncover The Roots |
| **Step 2 Take Your Root Cuttings**  For both woody plants and perennial plants, don't take more than one-third of the roots off. This way you will leave enough roots for the parent plant to recover.  **For Woody Plants**  1. Now that you have found healthy, pencil thick roots, take 2 to 6 inch (2 to 15 cm) cuttings and then cut into 2 to 3 inch (6 to 7.5 cm) sections.  2. **Important Tip**: Keep track of which side of the root is the "up" portion of the root and which is the "down" portion! The "up" portion is the part closest to the parent plant, and the "down" portion is the part farthest down in the soil. **This is important since they won't root upside down.**  3. The best way to keep track of "up" and "down" is to make a**flat cut** on top or "up" side, and a **slanted cut** on "down" or bottom side.  4. Cover the roots back up again and water the plant in.  **For Perennial Plants**  1. For plants with smaller roots, like perennials, take 2 to 3 inch (5 to 7.5 cm) cuttings the same way as above with a flat cut on top and a slanted cut on the bottom to help you remember the root's correct orientation.  2. Because with smaller plants we have lifted the entire plant out, after you have taken your cuttings, then replant the parent plant.  3. Water the plants to settle the roots back into the soil properly. | Take Your Root Cuttings |
| **Step 3 Plant Your Root Cuttings**  1. Use a deep pot, raised planter bed, or just in the soil somewhere to plant your root cuttings - as long as they are in a in a frost-free area.  2. Before you plant them, put a little bit of sand in the bottom of the hole and dust the bottom of each cutting with powdered sulfur to control fungi. This helps keeps the roots from rotting.  3. Plant in **moist** potting soil a few inches apart, and make sure that the tops of the cuttings are about 1 inch (2.5 cm) **below** the soil surface.  4. Cover with 1/4 to 1/2 inch (cm) of coarse sand or small gravel.  5. Water only when soil becomes dry and try not to keep the soil too wet because the roots can rot. | Dip Bottom Ends In Sulfur      Plant 1 inch (2.5 cm) Below Soil Surface    Cover With Coarse Sand or Small Gravel |
| **Step 4 When Shoots Appear, Plant Them Out**  1. In three to four weeks your cuttings should be forming roots, and some even may start to push new growth.  2. When new shoots appear, give them some liquid fertilizer at half strength.  3. Once the plants are established, they can be transplanted to individual pots or moved into the garden.  4. When planting out the cuttings, make sure the tops of the cuttings (the straight cut ends) are about 2 inches (5 cm) below the soil surface.  5. Keep in mind, perennial root cuttings can start pushing new growth fairly quickly, so you might need to protect them from any freezing weather. | New Shoots, Plant Them Out |
| **List of Plants For Root Cuttings:  Woody Plants**  **Angel's Trumpet** (Brugmansia) **Crabapple** (Malus) **Crape Myrtle** (Lagerstroemia) **Figs** (Ficus carica) **Glory bowers** (Clerodendrum) **Hydrangeas** (Hydrangea spp.) **Japanese Aralia** (Fatsia) **Lilacs** (Syringa vulgaris) **Mock oranges** (Philadelphus coronarius) **Oregon grapehollies** (Mahonia aquifolium) **Popler** (Populus) **Pussy willow** (Salix discolor) **Raspberry and Blackberry** (Rubus spp.) **Red and yellow twig dogwoods** (Cornus stolonifera) **Rose of Sharons** (Hibiscus syriacus) **Roses, nongrafted types** (Rosa spp.) **Snowball bush** (Viburnum) **St.John's-wort**(Hypericum) **Sumac** (Rhus typhina) **Trumpet vine** (Campsis radicans) **Weeping willow** (Salix babylonica) **Wisteria** **Yucca**  **Perennial Plants**  **Aster** **Anchusia Italica** (Related to Forget-me-not) **Barrenworts** (Epimedium spp.) **Bear’s breeches** (Acanthus mollis) **Bellflower** (Campanula) **Blanket Flower**(Gaillardia) **Blue stars** (Amsonia spp.) **Cardoon** (Cynara cardunculus) **Colewort** (Crambe cordifolia) **Comfreys** (Symphytum spp.) **Cranesbill** (Erodium) **Epimediums** (all do well) **False sunflower**(Heliopsis helianthoides) **Garden phloxes** (Phlox paniculata) **Gernaium** (Gernaium spp.) **Globe Thistle** (Echniops) **Hollyhocks** (Alcea rosea) **Horseradish** (Brassicaceae) **Japanese anemones** (Anemone X hybrida) **Japanese aster** (Kalimeris pinnatifida) **Joe Pye weed** (Eupatorium fistulosum) **Matilija poppy** (Romneya) **Oriental poppies** (Papaver orientale) **Pasque flowers** (Pulsatilla spp.) **Primrose** (Primula) **Rhubarb** **Sage** (Salvia spp.) **Sea hollies** (Eryngium planum) **Sea Kale** (Crambe maritima) **Statice** (Limonium spp.) **Yarrow** (Achillea) | Glory Bower  Glory Bower  Lilac  Lilac  Wisteria  Wisteria  Oriental Poppy  Oriental Poppy |
| **Conclusion**  That's it! It really doesn't get any easier than this if you want to propagate trees, shrubs and many perennials.  Now is the best time, so if you have some favorite plants that you would like more of, this is a fast, and economical way to do it.  Plus, if you have friends or neighbors that have plants you would like to have, they probably wouldn't mind your taking a few cuttings, so this is also a great way to add to your own garden.  Or - if they're up for it, swap some root cuttings from your yard in exchange for some root cuttings from your friends, family or neighbor's yards. You can really add quickly to your garden that way, and again, it costs nothing except a little bit of your time. |  |

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