

## **Hardwood Cuttings**

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**Q: I have been reading about using hardwood cuttings as a way to propagate new plants. Can you give me more information on this propagation method?**

**A:** Starting plants from your own cuttings can be an economical and relatively easy way to increase the number, range, and variety of plants in your yard. Most hardwood cuttings are made from deciduous trees or shrubs that generally go dormant in the winter. Trees and shrubs that are easy to start this way are fig, pomegranate, hydrangea, rose, and maple just to name a few. Cuttings should be taken between October and late winter when the plant has lost its leaves but before bud break in the spring. Cut pencil-sized branches in lengths of 6 to 12 inches long from the basal (lower) portion of the stem, because it stores more energy and nutrients than the tip. Do make sure that the branch used for cuttings is from more recent growth, you want either this seasons or last season growth. As you make the cutting, cut the top of the branch at a 45 degree slant so that you will know which direction to plant the cutting. Some experts recommend dipping the lower ends of cuttings in a rooting hormone (available at most nursery or garden centers) although not all agree it's necessary for rooting to take place. Either way, Plant the cuttings in a pot using a moistened, well-draining sand, cactus mix soil or composted bark. Make sure that there is not fertilizers added to the mix you choose

as this will inhibit root formation. Plant the cutting with at least half of the cutting buried in the soil. Check that the cuttings are placed right side up and place in a safe place such as your garage. Check them often so that you do not let them dry out. When the cuttings begin to root (this can take 6 weeks to several months), replant them temporarily in potting soil in a bright location. When they've put on considerable growth, you can plant them in their permanent location. A good source for more information is the *American Horticultural Society Plant Propagation: The Fully Illustrated Plant-by-Plant Manual of Practical Techniques*, published in 1999 by DK Books. A copy is available in the Master Gardener office on the Shasta College campus.