

Plant Propagation Made Easy

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Propagating your own plants can be fun, inexpensive and reward you with a variety of species that may not be commonly found in the nurseries. It's not just for ornamental plants either. Propagation can provide a greater variety of delicious and unusual vegetables.

One method of plant propagation, that we are probably most familiar with, involves buying a packet of seeds, sowing them in the ground and keeping them moist to wake them up. When we do that with radishes, beans, carrots, corn or melons, for example, we are usually well rewarded. When we try doing the same with peppers, eggplants and tomatoes, we don't usually fare as well. That is because some seeds are able to germinate in a wider temperature range. For example radishes germinate between 55F and 85F, while eggplant germinates best between 80F and 90F. The best source of information for germinating seeds is found right on the package or go online to the following websites: "[California Gardening Web](#)" or "[Cornell Home Gardening](#)."

Division is another easy method of propagation. Many perennials grow in thick clumps which can be divided. Iris reproduces by rhizomes and daylilies spread by fleshy roots, which also can be divided. Division does not only reward you with more plants, but also is a necessary task to maintain iris beds. If the crowns are not joined by horizontal stems, gently pull the plants apart. If the crowns are joined, use a sharp knife to cut the stems and roots. A similar method for bulbs or corms is called separation.

Propagation from cuttings, as the name suggests, is the process of cutting a stem or in some cases a root from the parent plant, then inducing that piece to grow into a new plant. Many ornamentals and herbs can be successfully grown from stem cuttings. It's best to use a good soil-less media that is sterile, so that it is free of diseases, weed seeds, and insects.

The Master Gardeners are holding a free "Advice to Grow By - Propagation Workshop" Saturday, April 21, from 10:00 a.m. until noon in the Garden of the Seven Sisters, 2156 Sierra Way, San Luis Obispo. Two Master Gardeners, skilled in the art of plant propagation, will walk you through the "how to" for each of these methods.

