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# Rooting Around

I started by propagating a Geranium at work and couldn't believe how easy and successful it was. I took the cutting, left it in a cup of water and soon roots appeared. After the root system was several inches long, I transferred the stem to soil and kept a close eye on it, probably too close! Like having a new baby in the house, I watched it's every move. Was the soil dry? Was that a new leaf coming? It's flowering!!! It can be really exciting and started me on a path of no return.

There are different ways to propagate plants. Propagating is taking a piece of a parent stock and creating new plants. So far, I have taken cuttings of plants and put them in water to root, like the Geranium. Some cuttings must be left out to callus over for a few days, like succulents, before directly sticking into soil. I love plants that propagate on their own by producing babies right in their own pot. An example of this is Spider Plant or the Pilea Peperomioides (Chinese Money Plant). I was lucky enough to get a Spider Plant (baby) from a friend and it has been thriving. I can't wait for it to produce

**I** adopted a hobby this year, like many individuals during a pandemic. Plants! I always loved plants but never had a green thumb. We also have cats that love to get into things, so I felt it was a challenge when it came to keeping plants alive and thriving.



Pilea Peperomioides baby plant sprouting.

babies of its own that I can re-pot! The Chinese Money Plant has produced lots of babies that I have separated and cloned. Propagating is a great way to increase your plant collection or share and trade with friends.

When propagating a plant like a tradescantia or a pothos plant, make sure you cut a piece just below a leaf node; this is where the leaf connects to the stem. This is where you new roots will form and emerge from when placed in water or soil. Your cutting should be a small section with only 1 or 2 leaf nodes, so the plant energy is focused on making new roots and not sustaining too much upper growth. You can buy or make propagating containers or use what you have at home. I use small glass jars so I can watch the water level and keep a close eye out for roots. I found a sturdy popsicle mold works really well when you are propagating multiple cuttings at a time. Once the roots get a few inches long, transplant them into a small pot of soil.



## Choosing the right pot

New plants can start off in a 2–4-inch pot, depending on how many cuttings you are putting in it. You never want to use a large pot for new or small plants. You may think it's a great idea and the plant will grow into the pot, but this can actually cause mold, lead to disease like root rot, and increase your chances of pests due to too much moisture in the soil. You need the soil to dry out between watering as this is

where the roots get their oxygen from. Once your plant is established and flourishing, you should go up only one pot size at a time. This will give your plant the room it needs as it grows and in return you will have a very happy plant.

Ideal pots to use are breathable pots like ceramic and clay as they are made from natural materials that allow both air and water to flow through their natural pores. Water will evaporate quicker in a clay pot, which will result in less chance of root rot and very beneficial for new gardeners who may over water. Remember, it is best to under water than to over water and look for pots with drainage holes. Drainage holes relieve excess water from your pot and again will help prevent root rot from over watering.

When watering your plants, stick your finger in your pot about an inch or two and see if the soil is dry. You should only water your plants when dry to the touch as all plants absorb moisture at a different rate, while weather and environment can affect this. If you do not have drainage holes you will need to be more careful with the amount of water you give your plants. If the soil is damp when you stick your finger in, it is not yet time to water. In addition to water and the nutrients your plant receives from soil, you will need to fertilize March to September, during the active growing season. Winter is a time plants slow down so there is no need to fertilize in the Winter months. Fertilizing for plants can be different for each variety, so it is best to read the requirements for your particular plant or to talk to a professional.

Plant enthusiasts and green houses go hand in hand. The local green house has a wealth of information and supplies



for gardeners. I visit Alternative Choice Garden Centre when I am in need of supplies and want to expand my garden or plant collection. For many gardeners, it is like a Christmas wonderland when you enter the green house! At Alternative they have the products you need to get started for propagating plants or germinating seeds. They have an assortment of supplies from mini dome greenhouses, heating mats, root stimulant, soil, pots and more. If propagating is not your thing, they have a wide selection of plants that include succulents and cacti, ferns and topicals. If there is a variety of plant you are looking for, they are more than likely to have it or can try and source it out for you.

When I visited Alternative Choice Garden Centre last month, Kerri was able to help me with all my gardening needs. Not only did they have the supplies I needed for my new hobby, but she was able to give me some very useful advice on propagating specific varieties of plants. Working with knowledgeable staff makes all the difference. Alternative is a year-round garden

centre, if you have questions or want to add to your collection, they are the place to go. Year-round they carry a full line of supplies from fertilizers to soil, tropical plants, planters, and décor. Approaching winter, you will see the garden centre full



of Christmas Trees, Poinsettias, and bursting with Christmas decorations and novelties. This is truly a magical time to visit the garden centre giving your winter blues a real mood boost. Spring and Summer, you will see many new additions of trees, shrubs, perennials and annuals, vegetables and herbs. Most of our trees and shrubs have come from Alternative and their tomato plants have never failed me.

When you purchase from a local greenhouse, you know you are buying plants that have been cared for by very knowledgeable staff who truly love what they do. I can see that when I go into Alternative and talk with their staff members. If you are just starting out or are an experienced gardener, I suggest stopping in soon as I'm sure this will be another year of booming gardens! - DYH



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