

## Notes of U3A Gardening Group meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> August, 2023 at Busy Bee Garden Centre.

**Present:** Joan Aherne, Annette O’Byrne, Mary Moriarty, Ferga and Dave Grant, Carol Morrissey, Mary Allen, Ann McGreen, and Una Hogan.

Philip gave us a talk on propagation and on how to take cuttings.

### Reproduction methods: -

- Seed sowing
- Cuttings –
  - Softwood
  - Semi-hard
  - Hard
- Layering – not used much now but very interesting – commercial businesses use layering for root stocks.
  - E.g. – One-whip Appletree is non-fruit bearing but is used as a rootstock for budding or grafting. The soil is mounded up around the stem and cut back. New shoots come up and you mound it up again and the shoots will produce roots. The soil is removed and the shoots and roots are cut and used.
  - Ground layering – this is your standard type of layering – You cut the shrubs back to only a small bit of the centre stem. Bend and tie down the side stems. Put a match into it to split it and apply root powder. New shoots will grow the following year and you can then split them into new plants.
  - Air-layering – “The smoke bush” (Cotinus). Take a stem. Get sphagnum moss (from a bog not from a wood). Make a ball and wrap plastic around the stem – make a slight nick in the stem before wrapping. Leave it for one year. The gardens at Mount Congreve do this. There are lots of rare plants down in Mount Congreve – worth a visit. Mount Congreve propagates these rare plants and distributes them to botanic gardens (not sold commercially). I googled The smoke Bush as Philip suggested and here’s the link to the UK RHS site. <https://www.rhs.org.uk/plants/97746/cotinus-coggygria-royal-purple/details>

### **Guidelines for taking cuttings: -**

#### **N.B.**

The two most important things are: -

1. Time of year;
2. Eyes and Hands (what you see and feel).

Time of year: -

#### January

Chamaecyparis  
Junipers

#### February

Junipers  
Thuja

### March

Elaeagnus (silver leaf and edible fruits);

### April

Junipers  
Thuja  
Elaeagnus

### May and June

Softwoods

### July, Aug, Sept and Oct

Semi-hard – big time for cuttings  
Lonicera

### November

Hardwoods.

Q.: - So – what do you stick the cuttings into?

A.: - The Substrata. (strictly speaking – this is not compost)

Philip recommended the book “The Nursery Stock Manual” by J. C. Kelly, J. G. D. Lamb, and Peter Bowbrick. It’s an old book and you should look out for it in 2<sup>nd</sup>-hand bookshops. I searched Amazon.com and there are two used books priced at €14.95.

### Kinsealy research Centre: -

Research done into Peat as a sub-strata.

- It is aseptic.
- It is water retaining.

Peat contains sphagnum moss which is anti-septic – it was used to treat wounds in the world wars.

The Kinsealy range mix ratio is 2:1 peat to sand.

There are different grades to the peat – depending on the grain size (the colloidal factor).

A medium grade would have 5ml - 20ml colloidal factor. Characteristics: -

- Grainy;
- Water retaining;
- Aseptic;
- Good air-fill porosity between grains (AFP) – (good for arthropods and worms);

So - when you take cuttings – remember -

- Air (AFP);
- Moisture;
- Heat – sun, or polytunnel, or a tunnel in a glasshouse (tunnels within tunnels help maintain the right temperature).
- Improvise – use coat-hangers and place white polythene over a raised bed (to reflect light and not burn the plants).

Note – Irish peat is not allowed to be sold in Ireland – but we are allowed to import it from other countries!

Alternatives to peat for your substrata: -

- Polystyrene beads;
- Perlite (water retaining);
- “Compost”
- Soils.

Whatever you use you must have air, moisture and heat.

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**Houseplants** – houseplant cuttings are now generally propagated in vitro – in Agar jelly with added trace elements. At a certain stage then they are planted into a different medium and sent to nurseries.

Commercial businesses use Laminar Flow Cabinets to propagate millions of cuttings. Everything is aseptic in these cabinets. These enterprises often employ nurses because of their knowledge of sepsis.

Philip brought cuttings of **Cotoneaster** (Variegated) and Cotoneaster Horizontalis to give us a demo of how to take cuttings.

Take your cuttings from this year’s growth;

Be consistent - Cut them straight and all to the same size;

Take off the lower leaves; You may dip them in rooting powder if you wish;

Plant them straight down;

Check them every day – enough moisture? Any signs of disease?

**Broom** cuttings: -

Look at the timber. You will see old wood and new wood.

Seed pods grow on 1-year old+ timber. This is too old for cuttings.

You cut through where the bud scales were (above last year’s growth and below current year growth). This is called the pulvinus.

You need a “heel” cutting; Trim the heels.

I did a Google search to explain and show a picture of a Heel cutting: -

*Heel cuttings are made where a stem is pulled off with a piece of the stem attached. Select a side-shoot and pull down gently so a tail of the bark of the main stems comes with it. Trim the tail end of the heel with a knife or pruners.*



**Pittosporum** cuttings – Good hedging (expensive to buy);

Take the cuttings in October from this year's wood but not the latest spurt. Take off the latest bit and use the piece behind it.

Cut through the pulvinus and then wound the base by scraping the surface with your budding knife. Use rooting powder if you wish (or do an experiment by using rooting powder on some of the cuttings and non on others).

Plant the cuttings – 2 or 3 in each pot.

**Buddleia** – Buddleia stems are square!

The leaves of Buddleia are very big. Cut the leaves to reduce transpiration.

Take your cutting from an internodal section – softwood early in the year or you can take cuttings as hardwood in November.

**Clematis Montana**

Feel the “floppiness of the stem. It should be firm but not woody.

The stem for cuttings of clematis are quite long – just take a nodal cutting and 2 buds and leaves.

**Lavendar** – prone to 2 diseases - Shab and Botrytis

Grow Lavendar in a dry-ish environment - more prone to disease if too much moisture.

In the summer, take the cutting with a heel and strip it down. Feel the timber and cut out the head.

Choose non-flowered shoots from this year's growth.

Miscellaneous piece of information

**Do not cut back Lavendar until March.**

**Hebe**

November

In tunnel within a tunnel.

Very simple to propagate – just keep an eye on it.

**Photinia (Red Robin)**

August

Take an internodal cutting and trim back to just 2 leaves.

Cambium tissue – the layer underneath the outer layer

Take a sliver off the side at base (at opposite side to the bud).

**Hydrangea**

Late summer. Semi-ripe.

Cut the leaves.

Have “Root primordia” on stems.

All that is needed is encouragement for the roots to pop out.

Take internodal cutting with 2 leaves and cut the leaves.

Short stem and put into the substratum right up to the leaves.

Commercial propagation of Hydrangea put the cuttings in the freezer with apples. This defoliates them they are then sent to nurseries in pots where they are “forced” – as they come into the warmth and good growing conditions. If you buy Hydrangeas which were forced – you buy them “in flower” but you will get no flowers the following year. They will flower every year thereafter. If they are not forced, they will not skip a year.

Hydrangea normally flower in June, July and August. If they are flowering earlier – they were forced.

Do not dead-head Hydrangeas until March – because they flower on the current year’s growth. Cut back to about 6 inches off the ground and keep only the best shoots.

### **Azalea**

They like to be “wounded”.

Take cutting and take Head off.

Double-wound the end of the cutting (2 slivers)

PH of the substratum should be 7 – do not use tap water – it is too limey.

Hardwood cuttings e.g., of Griselinia hedging – should be taken in November.

### **Rooting Hormones**

3 types – naturally occurring in plants: -

- IBA
- IAA
- NAA

You can use Aspirin (Salicylic Acid) – this is from the Salix (Willow) – you can make your own by boiling sticks from the willow.

**Don’t forget to label your cuttings!**

**UH 23 Sep 2023**

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### **Next meeting**

**Tuesday, 26<sup>th</sup> September** at 10.30am - Busy Bee Garden Centre. Philip will give us his monthly talk. Let me know a few days in advance if there are any topics you want him to cover.