

Rooting rhododendrons and azaleas from stem cuttings

When to take cuttings:

- Mid July to early fall (September-October)
- New growth that is just hardening off (known as semi hardwood)
- In the morning when full of moisture.

What kind of cutting:

- Choose firm wood just beginning to brown at the base
- The shoot should be pliable, if it breaks when bent it is either too soft or too hard
- The leaves should be mature
- *Choose terminal cuttings that **don't** have flower buds, flower buds are much larger in size than leaf buds*

Size of cutting:

- 3-6 inches long
- *Remove all but the top two-three leaves from the whirl (to reduce the leaf area)*
- *Cut back the remaining leaves by 1/3rd and remove any flower buds if necessary*
- Cut the stem at the base at a 45degree angle, this allows for greater surface area
- *The cutting may be wounded on both sides by gently cutting down to the cambium, this will encourage callusing and root development DO NOT GO ANY DEEPER*
- Stick the cutting in a rooting hormone (2 or 3)
- Shake off any excess rooting hormone

Sticking cuttings:

- Stick cuttings in a mix of 50% peat moss, and 50% horticultural perlite or vermiculite
- Use sterile flats or individual pots and fill with 10cm of media
- *Stick the cuttings firmly in the media, be sure that the cuttings are not touching each other*
- Place in greenhouse or cover the flat with a clear plastic bag (keep the plastic from touching the foliage). The plastic should not be tight and should allow for air circulation.
- Keep away from direct sunlight
- Place on bottom heat (75 degrees)
- Keep cuttings misted while rooting
- Grow lights can be used to supplement inadequate lighting

Care:

- Fertilizers are not necessary until the cuttings have developed roots and are putting on new growth
- Take care not to over fertilize as salts from the fertilizer can damage new root tissue
- Do not let the soil dry out.
- Rooting takes about 6 weeks for evergreen azaleas and 3 to 4 months for large-leaf rhododendrons.
- Once rooted, pot or transplant cuttings to 10cm pots containing a sterile mix of 60% peat moss and 40% perlite
- Add a slow release fertilizer to the pots such as Osmocote or fertilize once a month with a water soluble fertilizer
- Removing terminal buds promotes sturdy well-branched plants.
- Harden the plants off slowly, both to temperature and light.