

# Easy Rose Propagation

By

Sue Zanne Petersen

There are many resources to learn how to propagate a rose. There are stories about grandmothers that took a cutting, stuck it in the ground & covered it with a mason jar to give birth to a new rose plant. They obviously had well-prepared garden beds with lots of organic matter for that to work. People with green houses have their methods and other people create miniature greenhouses to propagate roses. I bought my first antique rose in 2002 and was rapidly hooked on growing roses. I tried several methods to propagate more roses and failed. I tried the miniature greenhouse method and all the cuttings died due to fungal growth. My mother taught me how to propagate African violets and all kinds of house plants. I was also successful with annual & perennial plant propagation. It was very frustrating to fail for several years with roses. Then I did it! Here's the method that works for me at my Zone 7 North Texas home.

1. Purchase a bag of soil-less potting and planting mix. Nurseries carry this year-round and the "big-box" stores usually carry it only in the Spring.



2. Fill a clean one-gallon pot with the mix, water thoroughly, and tap gently to settle the mix and push out the air. Wait to insert any cutting until the mix is saturated, because the cutting must be kept moist at all times.

3. Obtain a very good quality bypass pruning shears. There are two types of pruning shears: bypass & anvil. An anvil pruning shear will damage the mother plant and cutting.



Anvil (wrong)



Bypass (right)



4. Select a healthy green stem from your favorite rose. I take cuttings in February - March and September - October when I am pruning the mother plant. I also obtain cuttings from bouquets any time of the year - if they succeed, I have a new rose from a friend's garden. The stem needs to have at least 8-10 leaf nodes.



5. Remove flowers and buds. The cutting needs to put all of its energy into growing roots, not flowers.



6. Remove the leaves from the lower half of the cutting. Keep 3-4 leaves on the upper half of the cutting and remove 3-4 leaves on the lower half. Leaves are needed for photosynthesis to occur while the roots are developing at each node where the lower leaves were removed.



7. Make holes in the mix with a stick. Pushing the cutting directly into the mix may damage it.



8. Place 8-10 cuttings in each pot, water the pot and add a label with the name of the rose and date of propagation.



9. Place cuttings in an area outdoors that receives morning sun and shade from the afternoon sun. Sycamore trees grow in my yard and make a perfect place to keep the pots while the roots are developing.



10. Transfer each cutting to a 4 or 6" pot with rose soil after there are a lot of roots. Do not be in a hurry to make the transfer. Allow time for adequate root development before the transfer.



## Warnings

- If you allow the mix to dry out one day, the tender new roots will die and the cutting will not succeed in producing a new rose plant.
- Make sure you know which end is the top and which end goes into the mix - flowers and buds form at the top.
- Do not propagate cuttings from roses that are still under a patent, such as the Knockout roses.

## Tips

- Some people gently crush the bottom of the cutting, while some people use root stimulator. Experiment and see what works for you. I have had 50-75% success without using these methods.
- By keeping the cuttings outside while the roots and leaves are developing, they will be hardened to the conditions in your yard and not need to be hardened off as they do when grown in greenhouse conditions.

## Resources

- American Rose Society
- local Rose Society
- local Master Gardeners
- County Extension Office

## Presenter Biography

Sue Zanne Petersen began organic gardening as a child in her mother's Minnesota garden. "Organic Gardening" magazine was their guide. Her mother attended horticulture classes at the University of Minnesota and passed the knowledge to Sue Zanne. She learned to propagate African violets and other houseplants as a teenager. She moved to Denison in 1981 and began growing a country style garden containing vegetables, herbs and flowers. She incorporated composted horse manure in the clay soil and now uses donkey manure produced by her four donkeys. She believed she could not grow roses because she KNEW they had to have pesticides and fungicides to flourish. Then she learned about old fashioned roses and the Earth-Kind program. She obtained her first roses in 2002 from Texoma Landscapes that were listed as "surprise roses" and cost \$5 each. They turned out to be Caldwell Pink, Prosperity, New Dawn and Martha Gonzalez roses. They thrived with organic methods and no pesticides or fungicides. She attended the Earth Kind Rose program lead by Neil Sperry and Dr. Steve George in 2003. She received Country Dancer and LaMarque roses and became an Earth Kind brigade evaluator. She tried propagating roses for several years before finding a method that worked with a 75% or better rate of success. It is a slow method.

