

CUTTINGS – THE SKINNY

Prepare the potting medium before cutting the stems and fill the containers. If using peat pots, be sure to soak them first. Have bags, labels, rooting hormone, anything else you needed ready. If you're reusing pots, given them a bleach rinse.

Cut the cuttings from well-hydrated plants if at all possible. After a good soaking rain is best. At least water the plants well and deeply the night before. The cutting stem should be still green (not woody) but not soft enough to be limp. The easiest way to identify a good cutting is to use a stem from which the bloom has fallen. The fatter the better. Cut the bloom end above the next set of leaves and the lower stem below a set of leaves 5-6 inches down. Cut as close to the lower set of leaves as you can without damaging the joint. A cutting from the end of the branch is the best, but with roses with long canes, you can make several cuttings from one branch.

Stick the cuttings immediately if not before. If you can't use them right away, submerge them in water. If you can't use them for several hours or until tomorrow, roll them in a damp paper towel, put them in a plastic bag and put them in the refrigerator. Use a rooting hormone or not; some people swear by its effectiveness, others by its uselessness. If you are using a hormone powder and have been soaking the cuttings, wipe them off to avoid having too thick a coating that could clog the cut stem. Make a hole in the medium with a dibble to avoid disturbing the layer of rooting hormone.

LABEL THE POT WITH THE NAME OF THE ROSE AND THE DATE!! Put the container in a baggie or cover it with plastic and place it in a lightly shaded spot outside or in a window. If you don't want to cover the pot or prefer to stick cuttings directly in the ground, take care to water every day.

Wait for roots (THIS IS THE HARDEST PART). Anywhere from 4 to 12 weeks depending on the season and the individual rose. Look for roots coming out of the drain holes. As long as the stem is green, the cutting is alive; patience is a virtue. When the cuttings are rooted, replot into 4-inch pots or directly into gallon containers. Keep them in the partly shaded spot for a couple of weeks and water with Superthrive.