

Propagate ornamentals and muscadines

Early to mid summer is a good time to propagate a number of ornamental shrubs as well as muscadine grapes.

Now is a good time to propagate many ornamentals such as oleanders, hydrangeas and azaleas. To do this, take tip cuttings three to five inches long with several leaves attached. Place the cuttings in a rooting medium in a shady area and keep them moist by covering them with a plastic bag or by using a mist system. Many rooting mediums can be used. The most common are sand and mixtures of peat and perlite. You may want to use a rooting hormone to hasten root growth.

Now's also a good time to propagate cold sensitive ornamentals in your landscape. You might think about rooting a few cuttings before winter and keeping the young plants in a protected place. Then, if some of your tender ornamentals do freeze this winter, you'll have replacements to set out in the spring.

Early summer is the best time of the year to propagate muscadine grapes, too. Muscadine grapes (*Vitis rotundifolia*) are native to the southeastern United States. They are tolerant to most insects and diseases and normally can be grown with a minimum of care.

Pete Andersen, Horticulture Professor and Extension Fruit Crops Specialist with the University of Florida North Florida Research and Education Center in Quincy, provides the following advice on rooting muscadine cuttings.

Over the last fifty years improved cultivars of muscadine grapes have been developed with superior fruit quality. In the wild, muscadine grapes are propagated sexually from seed and asexually by a natural tendency to root as shoots make contact with the ground. Asexual propagation produces a plant that is genetically identical to the mother vine, whereas propagation from seed results in seedlings that vary genetically and that are not true to type.

The easiest and most common method of propagation is by using stem cuttings. This is accomplished by selecting shoots that are two or three nodes long and $\frac{1}{4}$ or $\frac{3}{8}$ inches in diameter. Keep grapevine shoots cool and moist during transport prior to planting. Next, insert the basal end of each two or three node shoot in light textured potting media. (Dipping the basal end in a Rootone or a product that contains indole butyric acid, a rooting hormone, may facilitate rooting). It is best to root grapevine cuttings in a mist bed, although some success can be had by placing cuttings in a cool shady location with daily watering.

An inexpensive mist bed can be constructed using PVC pipe, misters and a time clock. Cuttings root in about two to three weeks, at which time misting can be reduced or discontinued.

Growers and hobbyists sometimes propagate grapevines by taking advantage of the tendency of muscadine shoots to form roots by a process called pegging. This technique is most appropriate to root a small number of vines and does not require a mist bed. Simply cover a low growing shoot with soil as it touches the ground. Rooting efficiency can be increased by making shallow successive cuts to shoot prior to covering with soil. After a month, roots should have formed and the shoot can be severed from the mother vine and planted. Make sure to keep the roots of the newly propagated vine evenly moist but not soggy wet.

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