PROPAGATION BY SOFTWOOD CUTTINGS
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With spring and early summer we enter the growing season that allows us to try one of the easiest and most successful ways of propagating perennials. If you are new to this, start by taking cuttings from plants such as fuchsias, forsythias, hydrangea or Daphne. You can gather your cuttings from your own yard or possibly a friend or neighbor who has a plant you particularly admire.

The cuttings need a humid environment from start to finish as they loose moisture rapidly which will reduce your chances for success, so plan ahead. You will need a sharp knife, container for collecting the cuttings, small pots, rooting soil and some sort of moisture retaining propagator. The steps to follow:

1. Take 6" cuttings from non flowering plant tips, cutting just above a node or leaf joint.
2. Immediately place in a plastic bag or container with moist soil. Keep out of sun.
3. Have propagating soil ready (this can be potting soil, but a mix of ½ peat and ½ builders sand/vermiculite works best) along with your pots and propagator.
4. Trim cuttings to about 4", cutting just below a node, and remove leaves from bottom third with a sharp knife.
5. Dip bottom ¼" in hormone rooting powder that contains fungicide and tap off excess.
6. Insert cutting in soil mix so that the lowest leaf is just above the soil. You don't want the leaves touching the soil, pot, or sides of propagator as this leads to mildew.
7. Label and spray with a fine mist and place in your propagator (this can be a plastic dome covered tray, glass covered container, or plastic bag secured around the pot with a rubber band).
8. Keep cuttings in good light (not sun) and check daily that they don't dry out. Open every other day or so to ventilate.

There are little or no nutrients in the starter soil, so feed with a weak liquid fertilizer once a week. When you see new growth the cutting has probably started to root and can slowly be introduced to unprotected conditions and sunlight. There you have it!