



DIBLEYS

FACT SHEET NUMBER 1

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Cuttings can be taken at any time of the year when the parent plant has a good supply of fresh young leaves. In practice this usually means Spring or Summer.

The leaf chosen should be taken from near the centre of the plant and be green and fresh-looking along its whole length, not yellow or dying back at the tip. Snap the leaf off at the base. There are basically three different ways that cuttings can be done.

Method 1



Using the whole leaf: this is the easiest method, but you will only get one plant.

Insert the base of the leaf about 2.5 cm (1 in.) deep into the compost in a small pot 8cm (3 in.) in diameter, and water lightly.



Use either a proprietary compost specially produced for cuttings, or a houseplant compost mixed in equal proportions with medium grade vermiculite and perlite.

After watering, place the pot in a covered propagator or alternatively place a polythene bag over the pot. Use some sticks to hold the bag clear of the leaf cutting. Place your propagator or pot in a bright place but not in direct sun.

After about a month or so the leaf should have rooted, and after a second month a tuft of leaves will appear at the base of the cutting. Gradually increase the ventilation in the propagator (or open the polythene bag a little at a time over several days until it is finally removed), so that the young plant becomes used to the room humidity.

After another 8 – 10 weeks young flower buds will start to emerge from the base of the leaves. Start feeding a high potassium food as the roots appear in the drainage holes at the bottom of the pot.

Method 2



This is a slightly slower process but is useful if several plants are wanted. The leaf being used as the cutting should be cut transversely into several pieces, each about 5cm (2 in.) in length (as shown above). The number

obtained from one leaf will obviously depend on the size of the chosen leaf. Make sure the leaf sections are planted the correct way up, i.e., place the basal end, which was the point of attachment, in the compost.

Instead of using pots, propagating cell pack divided into several sections can be used, putting a piece of leaf in each cell. Subsequently, treat as described for Method 1, potting up each rooted cutting into an individual 10cm (3½ in.) pot.



Method 3

Lots of plants can be produced by this method, but leaves are more liable to rot and die. More suitable for the experienced grower.

If many plants are required, then choose a broad leaf and cut it cleanly down either side of the midrib. The midrib is then discarded and each half of the leaf, cut face down, is set into compost (the same compost mixture as in method 1) in a seed tray, the cut face being just covered in compost.



Again, treat as in method 1. However, if conditions are not ideal, leaves are more liable to rot and die by this method, which is more suitable for an experienced grower who has the use of a heated propagator. As many young plants will grow along the length of the leaf, a single leaf can give several dozen plantlets.



When the young plantlets are well established, i.e., the leaves are 2.5 to 5 cm (1 to 2 in.) in length, the old leaf can be carefully teased from the compost, along with its row of plantlets.

Break the old leaf into chunks with a few plantlets on each, or carefully separate the young plantlets from the parent leaf, taking care not to damage the network of fibrous roots, and plant each section or plantlet into potting compost in a 10cm pot. Ensure the plantlets are not planted too deeply or too shallowly in the new compost, but at the same height as they were previously. Water thoroughly. A light misting of water will help for a few days until the plants are established in their new pots.



Alternatively, plant the small clumps of plantlets or individual plantlets into sections of a propagator, and allow them to grow on for a month or two before potting-up. After a few weeks, the parent leaf will probably wither and die.