
It's Never Too Late...

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Cold weather may bring an end to many regular gardening activities, but it is still not too late to root a few azalea cuttings. Azaleas can be rooted at almost any time of year, even when the plants are dormant.

When taking cuttings during the fall or winter months, I prefer twiggy growth without flower buds, but almost anything will do. I usually take short cuttings, two inches or less in length, and remove the lower leaves. I also try to remove any flower buds so that none of the plant's energy will be wasted producing blooms. After dipping cuttings in a rooting hormone, I stick them in my standard potting medium, a damp mixture of peat, sand, and perlite. Finally, I enclose the containers (recycled gallon milk jugs) in clear plastic bags, and place them under fluorescent lights timed for "long day" conditions, 15 to 24 hours of light per day.




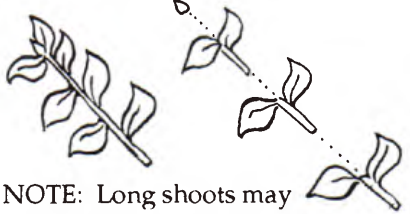
Cuttings will break dormancy in about five to eight weeks, wherein new growth and new roots start developing about the same time. The potting medium should be kept damp, but never wet since fungus diseases can be a problem with excess moisture. Anyway, cuttings seem to form stronger root systems if kept on the dry side. Condensation on the plastic bags will fall back onto the soil like rain, maintaining a balanced ecosystem that should be able to last a year or more without any care. Watch out for insects, though, since familiar pests such as lace bug will also enjoy the optimal conditions. Although these mini-greenhouses should not need to be looked at until spring, as the weather worsens and snow is swirling around outside, the developing plants and an occasional flower under the plastic can be as captivating as a new batch of garden catalogs.

When spring finally arrives, the cuttings can be potted up and grown on outside. An added benefit to this method is that azaleas rooted during the winter months are usually large enough by fall to survive the following winter without cold frame protection.

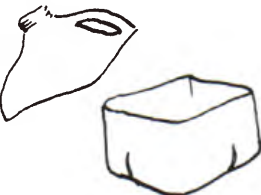

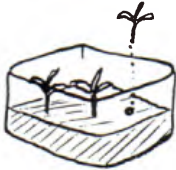

So, if you forgot to root some favorite azalea last summer, or if winter storms do some unwanted pruning of a prized plant, why not give dormant rooting of azalea cuttings a try. A little time spent propagating during the off season can mean a lot of extra plants to share with friends next year.

DORMANT ROOTING OF AZALEA CUTTINGS

Preparation:

-  (1) Select current season's growth
-  (2) Remove lower leaves
Pinch out flower buds
-  (3) Dip cutting in rooting hormone
-  (4) NOTE: Long shoots may be cut into several sections

Planting:

-  (5) Use clean plastic gallon jugs, cut off
Make slits for future drainage
-  (6) Fill half-way with moist peat, sand, and perlite
-  (7) Insert cuttings
-  (8) Enclose in plastic bag
Place under fluorescent lights

Prize For Best Article In THE AZALEAN— 1993—Robert T Stelloh

In 1989, the Board of Governors authorized the editor of **THE AZALEAN** to establish an annual prize for the best article to appear in **THE AZALEAN**. The concept was to acquire through donations, a fund which when invested would provide an annual prize for the best article published in **THE AZALEAN**. Funds were donated by the following chapters to establish the "CHAPTER'S PRIZE":

Tri-State
Richmond, Virginia
Ben Morrison
Northern Virginia
Brookside Gardens

As stated in the September 1990 issue, the best article each year will be selected by a poll of the membership. The prize will be announced and awarded at the Annual Meeting of the Society.

The prize for Best Article in **THE AZALEAN** for 1993 has been awarded to **Robert T. Stelloh** for his article "George Harding Azalea Garden—A Progress Report" which appeared in the December 1993 issue of **THE AZALEAN**. □