

ROOTING ROSES: *Selecting & Preparing the Cutting*

Hardwood cuttings are taken in the Fall. **Softwood** rooting is available when you see the bloom. A stem with a spent flower is desirable, but a stem with a bud with no color showing is probably too young. However, **ANY** time I find a good stem (regardless of time of year) I try to root it knowing that success rate goes down as temperature rises.

Always use cuttings that are fresh. In selecting a cutting, look for a straight stem with **heel wood** (see picture) which is that part of the cane with much bud material and therefore roots most easily. Cut right up against the main cane. Using pruning shears, cut a 4- to 6-inch length of stem, making sure the cutting has at least 4 five-leaflet leaves with bud eyes in the leaf axil. If the cutting is short because of the tight spacing between the leaflets, prepare a cutting with five bud eyes and leaves. The top two 5-leaflet leaves remain on the stem/cutting and the 2 or 3 lower leaves are removed, being careful not to damage the bud eyes in the leaf axil. Trim the cutting about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch above the top-most leaf stalk/bud eye. Shorten large leaves by clipping off the terminal leaflet. Follow the same method when preparing the cutting without **heel wood** but trim the cutting $\frac{1}{4}$ inch below the lowest bud eye.

Next, remove all thorns from the bottom half of the stem and "wound" it using your thumbnail or a knife to scrape 2 thin strips of bark (green layer) from the bottom 1/2 inch of the stem saving any bud eyes. Dip this end of the stem in rooting hormone, place half its length into the moist (not wet) soil in a 16oz foam cup with 4 holes cut at the bottom (for roots to show) or a transparent plastic cup where developing roots will be visible, and pack the soil around the cutting. Place foam cup with the cutting into a 16oz or so container, cover with quart-size plastic bag to provide needed moisture and place in bright light but not direct sun. New growth (from bud eyes) may appear in 8 days or may take more than 3 months. As soon as you see roots sticking out of the holes at the bottom of the cup, it is time to transfer the rooted cutting into 1gal pot very, very carefully.

*Always try to take the new year's growth right down to where it attaches to last year's cane. The **heel wood** is a part of the cane that roots most easily.†*



Paul Barden

That is success !!

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