The Rooter Pot

The rooter pot system makes it easy to clone trees, shrubs and vines in a short time. In just eight weeks, you can produce a brand new plant of a size that would take three years from seed or a cutting. It works on an old system of propagation called air layering.

Each rooter pot comes with:

- A hinged body/translucent pot
- A dark lid
- Dark stick-on labels

Choosing a Branch

This rooter pot system should work to clone most woody plants. It has been tested on the following plants: rose, apple, maple, cherry, azalea, rhododendron, honeysuckle, wisteria, bay, hibiscus, oleander, viburnum, gardenia, dracaena, dieffenbachia, ficus, and schefflera.

For best results, cloning should take place in the spring. Choose a healthy branch that is no more than 5/8″ diameter, as upright as possible with some side branching. If the branch is not in a mostly upright position, you will need to tie it with soft twine to keep the rooter pot as vertical as possible while the roots are forming.

Preparing the Branch

Use a small sharp knife to make two parallel cuts just deep enough to penetrate the bark and about 1/2″ apart around the branch (close to a bud or leaf) where you want to attach the rooter pot (see **Figure 3**). Make a vertical incision between the first two cuts. Gently peel the strip of bark away from the branch.

Cover the wound with rooting hormone. (Our SG690 root stimulator is ideal for this.)

Setting Up the Rooter Pot

Open the rooter pot and orient it around the wound such that the wound is approximately in the middle of the pot cavity. Close the pot and fill the reservoir with water (see **Figure 1**).

Pack the interior of the pot with moist, soilless (peat-based) potting mix, taking care not to remove the rooting hormone from the wound. You can make your own soilless mix by combining two parts peat moss with one part vermiculite. Water the potting mix well, then cover the rooter pot with the lid. Slide the tabs on the lid into the slots on the outside of the pot to secure the lid.

Apply the dark stick-on label to the outside of the translucent rooter pot. The label is necessary to keep sunlight off the roots. Record the start date on the label.

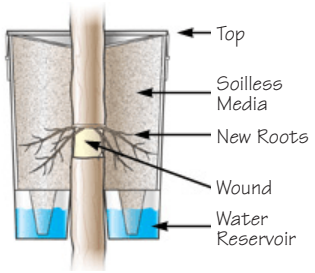

Figure 1: Cross-sectional view of the set-up.

Figure 2: The rooter pot system.

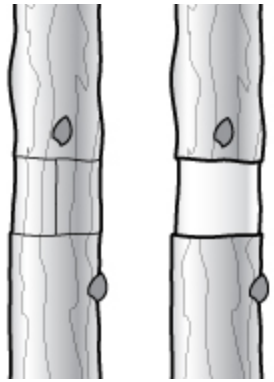

Figure 3: Wounding the branch.

Watering

Every week (or as needed), add a bit of water through the top of the pot to keep the potting mix moist and the reservoir filled. We found that a curved-tip syringe filled with water is perfect for this. Introduce the syringe tip into the slit in the lid, and "inject" the potting mix with water.

Note: *Since the mother plant is providing all the nutrients, it is not necessary to use fertilizer.*

Rooting Inspection

Rooting time will depend on the plant being cloned, and will vary from one region to another. Generally, you should inspect rooting progress after about six weeks and every two weeks thereafter. Gently peel the label back a bit to see how the roots are coming along. If the roots are sparse and insubstantial, the branch is not yet ready to be removed from the mother plant; leave the rooter pot in place and check again in two weeks. When the roots are abundant and start to reach the edge of the pot, the branch is ready to be removed from the mother plant.

Transplanting

Once it has adequately rooted, use a sharp knife or pruning shears to cut the branch just below the rooter pot.

Carefully take the lid off and remove the rooter pot, then transplant the new plant to a container or directly into the soil.

The rooter pot and lid can be reused, but should be cleaned thoroughly between uses.

Figure 4: Removing the branch from the mother plant.

Figure 5: Removing the lid.

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