

# Soft Wood Cuttings of Pelargoniums

Mary M. Maran

**MATERIALS** – Sharp and clean scissors, clipper or knife; sterile potting mix; clean pots (I use 4, 6 or 12 cell market packs depending on the cutting size), labels, pencil or magic marker, and hormone powder (optional).

**CUTTINGS** – Healthy stem with at least three (3) leaf nodes and the least amount of stem between nodes (3 – 4 total inches for the cutting). Check for and rinse off any insects.

**METHOD** – Fill pot(s) with soil and wet down thoroughly. Gently remove all but the top two or three leaves depending on their size and pick off all flower buds. Cut the stem just below the third node as this is where it will root. Dip in hormone and shake off excess. I have just as good success without using the hormone. Stick the cutting in the pot of soil firmly. Label the pot. Place them in a sunny spot and keep just moist. Some growers will let the cuttings callus overnight to lessen the chance of them rotting before it roots. I do not do this and generally have good success with them.

I maintain a current list of all my Pelargonium (Scented geraniums) to insure that when I take my cuttings in the fall (late August to mid October), which are labeled when planted in the spring, I am able to secure my entire collection or whatever survived the summer. I try to plan to do this in mid September as sometimes if the cuttings are taken in October they tend to sit and are slower to root and sometimes don't root at all. (Ideal time is mid March till mid September, when they are in active growth)

I generally take 3 to 6 cuttings per Pelargonium, depending on the variety, to insure I will have at least one plant to carry on the next generation. This I do one at a time to make sure they are labeled correctly.

Some varieties will root in as little as two weeks and others can take much longer so check often by either observing the roots coming out of the bottom of the pot or a gentle tug on the stem to see if it holds in place.

When they are sufficiently rooted they can be placed in a larger pot to grow on. I find a 2" pot is good as anything much larger will stay too moist and cause the plant to rot. They are succulents and prefer to be on the dry side. Once established in the pot I will give them a light feed once or twice a week. Some of the larger leaved varieties will demand a further repotting. Use your own judgment.

If they become leggy just pinch them back to maintain a good shape and remove any flower buds to promote a tighter growth.

During the winter months they tend to stand still as this is their normal dormant period. Come February they will become more active with growth and at this time you can take more cuttings with success of rooting.

I have also rooted cuttings in water although this method is not always successful when they are then thrown into soil. If you do this make sure the roots are white and not more than an inch in length before potting up. I use glass jars, clear or colored, as plastic containers can throw off a chemical that can inhibit rooting.

Use un-chlorinated water for exuberant growth! They will tolerate street water but not grow as well.