

Rooting Roses

First, note that the place where the leaf joins the cane is called the leaf axil. The plant always has a bud at this intersection. When new growth occurs on a plant, it comes from one of these buds, either one from this year's growth or a prior year's growth. It is new growth from one of these buds that you see. However, new growth requires nourishment, water, etc., which it obtains from the existing root system, existing leaves, etc. If you tried separating the new growth you see from the plant it would soon die because of the lack of any means to supply it with energy, nourishment, water, etc. Even if you stuck it in the ground it could not develop these support systems quickly enough.

You can, however, take cuttings from the plant and root them. The procedure can be found in numerous books and is relatively simple. One which I have used hundreds of times goes something like this:

- Cut two or three drainage holes in the bottom of a large plastic cup (like ones made by Solo). Fill the cup with good quality soil.
- When a rose has finished blooming, cut it off about 1 inch below the 3rd or 4th set of leaves below the spent bloom. (I prefer 4 sets but sometimes this makes too long a cutting, so then I use only 3.) Remove all leaves except two of the top two leaflets. Also remove the bloom and its stem. This is now your cutting.
- Sanitation is very important, so clean the cutting under moderately hot water and then give it a two minute soak in a Clorox solution (about 15 parts water to one of Clorox).
- Thoroughly rinse it again.
- Dip the bottom inch, described above, in one of the rooting hormone preparations such as Rootone.
- Use a pencil or stick to make a "planting hole" in the middle of the cup of dirt you prepared earlier. Insert the cutting in this hole, being careful not to knock off the rooting hormone. Firm the soil around the cutting.
- Bury the cup, with cutting, in a shady spot, out of direct sun, so that the rim of the cup is level with the ground. Water it thoroughly with a solution of Miracle-Gro or equivalent.
- Cut off the bottom of a 2-liter plastic Coke, Pepsi, etc., bottle and cover the cutting with this. Leave the top on. Make sure no leaves are touching the sides of the bottle. Push the bottom of the bottle into the ground about a half inch and push a little soil up around it, to make sure it stays in place when the wind blows.
- Go away and leave it alone. In about six or eight weeks you should see some new growth appearing. This happens after the cutting has first developed some roots inside the cup.
- After the cutting has developed a substantial amount of new growth, and on a shady day or late in the day after the sun has almost run its course, remove the bottle. If the plant does not wilt after an hour or two, leave off the bottle. If it wilts you may need to give a little

water to the cup, not the foliage, and re-cover it. Try again a few days later. Eventually you'll be able to leave the cover off and you then have a new, but small, rose plant which is a carbon copy of the one which produced the original bloom you cut off. (This method of propagation is asexual and does not provide an opportunity for any mutations, which is why you get an exact copy of your original plant.)

- Let it grow in place for another 3 or 4 weeks. After this you can treat it as a new plant and transplant it to a properly prepared hole, removing it from the cup at the last minute before inserting in the soil. Care for it as with any other newly planted rose, including spraying for disease control.

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