

Grow a New House Plant, and Save Money

Popularized by Pinterest-worthy hipster homes, the *Monstera Deliciosa* has become a sought-after house plant. Yet - as with most good things - as its popularity has risen, so has its price: these gorgeous plants, with their iconic large, split leaves, are often sold for over a hundred dollars. It may be no surprise then, that many people are keen to grow their own. The good news is that with just an existing plant, a pair of sharp scissors, a jar, and some water, one can easily skip the high price tag, and find joy in watching one's own new plant grow and thrive.

Before delving into the process of propagation - that is the technical term for taking cuttings from a mature, adult plant to create smaller, new plants - it is important to understand what is required. Firstly, you need an existing plant, from which to take a cutting. It is important to note that this should be a well-developed, thriving plant, with plenty of foliage: the best time to take a cutting from a *monstera* is in the spring, when it is actively growing. Secondly, you will need the following: clean, sharp sheers, or a very sharp knife; a large jar with fresh water - this could be vase, a jug, or even a large glass; and a pot with fresh soil. Once you have these items assembled, you are ready to begin.

The first step in the process is to take a cutting from the adult plant, but you cannot just take any old part of it. Indeed, you want to start by inspecting the plant to find the ideal cutting. Examine the stems to find an aerial root or leaf node: this is key, as these nodes are what turn into a new root. If you are struggling, look for a brown pimple-like swelling, located at the intersection of two stems. Once you have located one, this will be your stem for propagation. Now, take scissors and make a clean, diagonal cut an inch below this nodule. Now you have your cutting, and are ready to place it in water.

The second part of the process - the growing of the root system - requires a little patience. Take your cutting and place it in your jar of clean, room temperature water; make sure that the leaf node is fully submersed. Now it is time to find the perfect home for your plant to spend its time growing a new root system. Make sure that the cutting is able to remain upright in the jar, and place it in a bright, warm area, but not in direct sunlight. This is important, as the plant needs sunlight to grow its roots, but you do not want to burn the leaves. Once the perfect spot has been found, not it is now time for that patience: you need to leave the growing plant for a good two months, possibly longer. During this time, all you want to do is replace the water once or twice a week, and watch excitedly as the root system begins to grow and develop.

After a couple of months, you should see a lovely tangle of pale colored roots - this is how you know it is time for the final stage: potting. Take a pot - preferably one with room for growth and with holes at the bottom for drainage. Half fill it with compost or potting soil. Then gently place the cutting, with its developed root system, into the pot, and top up with more soil, until the roots are fully immersed. The very final task left is to water the soil liberally, allowing it to drain thoroughly. Thus the process is complete.

It can be surprisingly easy, cost-effective, and extremely rewarding to propagate your own house plants. With a cutting, a little bit of effort, and a large amount of patience, you too can have a thriving *monstera deliciosa* which is the envy of your friends. Yet if they are lucky, they might just get a cutting as a gift, to start their own green-thumbed journey.

