

PROPAGATION OF PHILODENDRONS FROM NODE CUTTINGS

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Brough, Petersen Nurseries grow and provide indoor plants, together with a maintenance service, for many business premises in Melbourne and the metropolitan area. For this reason we need a wide range of decorative plants to use under many different and sometimes quite difficult conditions.

Most city offices are closed from Friday to Monday and longer if there is a Monday holiday, leaving many inner offices in total darkness with no natural light whatsoever

The plants that go into these buildings must be strong and well grown. Unfortunately when these plants are replaced with new ones, those coming out are not as strong and healthy as they were to begin with. These, however, are the plants from which we take the cuttings.

When the old, tired plants are returned to the nursery, they are stripped of their lower leaves and lined up to wait their turn to be cut up for cuttings. I like to leave those that have come from poor conditions for several weeks to give them a chance to firm up and recover from their ordeal, thus using the best cutting material available to us.

We have found that one of the most versatile genera is *Philodendron*, as these plants will survive in almost, any situation depending on the species used.

The stems are prepared into single node cuttings, using sharp, clean, secateurs to avoid bruising, into pieces approximately 4 to 5 cms long, with 1 cm below the node and 3 to 4 cms above. There is a straight cut across the bottom and a slight angle at the top, sloped away from the eye.

The cut surface is dipped into Seradix cutting powder No. 1, or IBA 0.15% and talc. The cuttings are then placed into trays filled with damp propagating mixture of 50% German peat and 50% washed river sand. They are placed at an angle of approximately 45°, with the bud facing upward, just at surface level. There are usually around 15 rows of 10 across in each tray. These trays are then placed in a hot bed at about 27°C.

We do not have any automatic misting or watering; this is all done manually. We water Monday, Wednesday and Friday, as there is nobody available to water during the weekend. There is polythene over the beds which is rolled up or down

depending on the time of year and the weather. The beds are never fully enclosed as I like to have one corner open at all times for ventilation. We have a very good striking rate considering our material and conditions that are not perfect.

Once the cuttings have developed into good sized plants, they are potted on into either 4 or 5 inch pots. The 4" has one single plant potted into it, selected for its size and species. Later they will be placed around tree fern totems ranging from 2 ft to 5 ft in height. The 5" pots have 5 or 6 plants selected for compatibility placed together, which are later potted on as a multiple without a totem in 6 or 7 inch pots.

When these plants have reached maturity, they once again return to decorate the city buildings to start the cycle over again.

SIMPLE GREENHOUSE CONSTRUCTION USING LIGHTWEIGHT MODULES

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Two years ago, Jack Paterson — a fellow nurseryman and I discussed the concept of modular greenhouses. We both became very enthusiastic about the many developments we envisaged possible, so here are some of our suggested objectives for such a "modular house".

1) That the "greenhouse" be of sufficient size to allow for economic nursery operation.

2) That the "greenhouse" can easily be erected by 2 or 3 persons in a short time.

3) That the "greenhouse" be made out of light-weight material, simple in construction, and long lasting, with good light transmission.

4) That the "greenhouse" be well insulated and include a built-in ventilation system.

5) That the "greenhouse" be of a design which provides sufficient strength to withstand damage from the elements, especially hail.

6) That under ideal conditions, the "greenhouse" be self-sufficient in terms of energy input required for heating and cooling.

With all these objectives in mind, we looked at them one by one, and also in relationship to each other, and arrived at a