

Propagation by Bloomstalk by Mary Walbrick

Have you ever used a bloom stalk for propagation? If you have not, give it a try the next time you are putting down leaves. It is easy to do, and requires no special equipment.

This method is excellent with many hobbyists reporting great success with reproducing chimeras and fantasies. Some of the benefits for using bloom stalks are: you don't ruin the symmetry of your plant when you take a leaf for propagation, you need less room for propagation, and you are using plant material that is usually discarded.

When you are ready to begin this project, first gather the materials you normally use for propagation with a leaf. To save space in the propagation box, you can plant four or more stalks to a container.

When searching for bloom stalks, keep these things in mind. Choose varieties that have large bracts and are heavily marked with the desired traits and coloration. The stalk should be fresh and mature. A mature bloom best exhibits its characteristics. Variegated plants with very light bracts will not root and miniatures have such small bracts they are not recommended for this technique. Occasionally, the plantlets will not bloom true.

Be sure you use a sharp razor blade or knife to make a diagonal cut about one inch below the bract. Carefully, remove all buds and blooms as close to the bracts as possible. I allow my cuts to dry for 10-15 minutes. A small amount of rooting hormone can be used.

You are now ready to plant the stalk. Lightly moisten the soil with fertilizer water, and then place the stalk into the soil. Cover the container, with a plastic bag or clear cover, to maintain a slightly moist atmosphere.

You are now ready to put the prepared bloom stalks on the shelf and wait for results. They should be placed about 10-12 inches under fluorescent lights for eight to ten hours per day. The development time of the new growth will vary. It can range from 4-12 weeks before you see tiny leaves start to form in the middle of the bract..

When the plantlets are about 1-1/2 inches to 2 inches across, harden off and plant in your regular soil.

Now that my prop box is full of bloom stems, I wonder if this method will work on some of the other gesneriads?

