

## FOLIAGE PLANTS FROM SEED

Allen C. Botacchi  
Cooperative Extension Horticulture Agent

Seed propagation of foliage plants may provide a new profitable crop for your greenhouse. Transportation costs for shipping southern grown foliage continue to rise and reduce the profit margin. Occasionally, plant material received is infested with disease and insect pests. This can be significantly reduced or eliminated with seed culture.

The major seed companies do have a portion of their catalog devoted to foliage plant seed. Many of these companies also provide cultural information for germinating and handling foliage plant seed.

Various media have been successfully used to germinate foliage plant seed such as: 1) peat moss, vermiculite; 2) sphagnum peat; 3) sphagnum peat moss, horticultural grade perlite; and 4) commercial peat-lite mixes. The pH of the medium does not appear to significantly affect percent of germination in most genera.

Planting depth of seed should be gauged by the size of the seed--too deep a planting delays germination. Again, check company cultural sheets for current suggestions.

Medium temperature appears to be the most critical factor regulating germination. Foliage plant seeds have been successfully germinated at medium temperatures of 70°, 80°, and 83-91°F. Generally speaking the higher temperatures resulted in a more rapid rate of germination. Here economics and cultural sheets from the

seed firms should be considered. Days to germinate vary from 5 to 125 and days to transplant 12 to 133.

Fertilization of seedlings and transplants is suggested at a medium rate--150 ppm of 20-19-18.

Transplanted seedlings should be maintained in a 65°F plus greenhouse with shading provided as appropriate for the season.

Foliage plant seeds currently offered in the catalogs include:

*Aglaonema commutatum* or *modestum*

*Aloe variegata*

*Arabica nana*

*Arabica humilis*

*Aralia elegantissima*

*Aralia sieboldi*

*Araucaria excelsa* (Norfolk Pine)

*Ardisia crenulata*

*Asparagus cultivars*

*Beaucarnea recurvata* (Nolina)

*Beaucarnea guatemalenses*

*Chamaedorea elegans*

*Coffea arabica*

*Cordyline australis*

*Corynocarpus laevigata*

*Croton*

*Cupressus sempervirens*

*Cyperus alternifolius*

*Draceana draco*

*Ficus benjamana*

*Grevellia robusta*

*Harpephyllium caffrum*

*Hypoestes*

*Jacaranda mimosaeifolia*

*Leca coccinea*

*Mimosa pudica* (Sensitive Plant)

*Musa sandendium* (Banana Tree)

*Nepthytis emerald gem* or *variegated*

*Philodendron species*

*Pilea repens*

*Pittosporum tobira*

*Podocarpus maki*

*Rhoeo discolor*

*Sagina* (Irish Moss)

*Schefflera actinophylla*

*Schefflera arboricola*

### References

Mikorski, D.J. and J.W. White. 1977. Foliage plants--seed propagation and transplant research. Florists' Review Vol. 160 No. 4153 July 7, 1977: 55, 99-102.

Perry, L.P. and J.W. Boodley. 1980. Germination of foliage plant seeds in response to sowing media, depths of sowing, pH levels and medium temperatures. HortScience 15 (2): 194-196.

Poole, P.T., C.A. Conover, and R.W. Henley. 1975. Parlor palm seed germination. Florists' Review. Vol. 157 No. 4067, Nov. 13, 1975: 89,106.