

## PROPAGATING LARGE CACTI

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The shaving mug and brush technique is an excellent procedure for propagating species of large columnar cacti. This was the name of a technique submitted to a mini-symposium conducted by Desert Plants. Frank S. Crosswhite of the Boyce Thompson Southwest Arboretum has found that his technique also greatly reduces the problems caused by bacterial and fungal rots and also prevents the disfiguring right angle bend that develops when these plants are rooted in a horizontal position.

### PROCEDURE

Place equal parts of powdered sulfur and commercial rooting powder into a large mug and add water to make a thin, creamy paste. Take one to two-foot apical cuttings of the cactus to be propagated, using a pruning saw for this procedure. Make sure to cut at right angles so the cutting will stand on end.

With an old-fashioned shaving brush, spread the paste mixture onto the freshly cut end of the cutting and place it on its side to air dry. This should take a few hours. According to Mr. Crosswhite, "The sulfur in the paste dries out the cut surface rapidly and sterilizes the wound by forming sulphuric acid on the moist surface and also kills many of the organisms which might result in necrosis. The rooting powder provides hormonal growth regulators, which induce rapid development of adventitious roots."

Store the cuttings vertically for callousing in a thin layer of vermiculite spread on the bottom of a nursery container. The container should be selected so the cutting will fit snugly and not wobble. This will help keep the cutting from tipping over. A nursery container is preferable to a pot since it has vertical sides that will hold the cutting in place more securely.

Store the cuttings in this position in 50 to 95 percent shade for one month before giving the plants any water. After the first watering, they can be watered at weekly intervals and then every two to three days. The cuttings can be potted into a larger container in an appropriate soil mix as soon as they have produced a large mass of roots.

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