**Propagation of Woody Cuttings**

**Segment for Week of Sept 21, 2020**

This is Steve Ruleson with information on shore friendly living and gardening from the Master Gardeners and Virginia Cooperative Extension.

Have you ever seen roots growing from a vase of pussy willow or forsythia? This is an example of how easy it is to start new plants from hardwood cuttings. Propagation by stem cuttings is the most popular method used to cultivate new woody plants and enables an exact replica of a favorite shrub or tree. It also saves money by avoiding the purchase of multiples of the same plant. And they are fun to do!

Late fall to early winter is the best time to take hardwood cuttings. Plants such as dogwood, figs, forsythia, euonymus, roses, and hydrangea are best taken from hardwood. The stems should be mature and leafless with no signs of growth.

For a greater chance of success, take cuttings from plants grown in full sun. Avoid taking cuttings from plants that are showing signs of stress (such as lack of water) or nutrient deficiency. In general, cuttings taken from young plants are more successful.

Early morning is the best time to take the cuttings. They must be kept cool and moist until planted. They can even be kept in a plastic bag in the refrigerator if not planted right away. The rooting medium should be sterile, low in fertility and well drained for sufficient aeration. A good mixture is one-part peat moss and one-part of either perlite or sand.

Make each cutting from the lower part of one-year-old stems, including at least two leaf nodes. Dip the lower node into a rooting hormone, shake off any excess, and insert it vertically into the growing medium. The upper node, above the soil line, will be the place where new growth appears. Cover the cuttings in plastic and place them in indirect light, maintaining a temperature of between 65 and 75 degrees. Keep the cuttings moist until they have rooted.

Check for root growth by gently pulling upward on the cutting. You will feel resistance if roots have formed. Newly rooted cuttings should be moved into a larger container or planted in a nursery bed, providing good quality soil and spaced 6 to 12 inches apart.

At first, provide daily watering. Gradually increase the watering intervals to once or twice a week. Do not fertilize since tender new roots may easily be burned by fertilizer salts. After a couple of seasons in the temporary bed, the new plants can be moved to their permanent site in the landscape.

For more information or for answers to your questions, contact your local Accomack or Northampton County Extension Office.

Here in xx, I recorded xx inches of rain this past week.