

The Klassy Way to Root Roses

(Presented by Connie Hilker, adapted from a method by Diana Klassy.)

This is one of many ways to propagate roses and other plants from cuttings. It is simple to learn, and it uses materials that you may already have on hand.

Supplies: Half-gallon milk jug, clear 2-liter soda bottle, good-quality potting media, rooting hormone, pruners, sharp knife.

This method uses the bottom of the milk jug as a pot, and the top of the soda bottle to form a greenhouse.

Cut large drainage holes in the bottom of the milk jug.

Fill the milk jug with moist potting media. Water thoroughly and let drain.

The best rose cutting is a stem with a dead flower on it, with four to six sets of leaves. If possible, get the heel wood where the cutting emerges from the main cane. If you cannot get a heel, cut below a leaf bud. Remove all but the top two or three sets of leaves.

With the sharp knife, score the end of the cutting on two or three sides ... cutting only through the outer layer.

Dip scored cutting into rooting hormone. (dampen cutting if using powdered hormone)

Make a hole in the potting media, insert the cutting, water thoroughly.

Cover the cutting with the soda bottle top.

Place your container in a protected location ... outside, place it the shade (under a bush is a good place); inside, in a window with bright indirect light. No direct sunshine at this point, or the container will overheat and your cutting will die. There should be no need to water your cutting ... condensation inside the soda bottle is a good indication that the cutting has sufficient moisture.

Cuttings can produce roots in as soon as four weeks, or as many as eight, ten, or more weeks. Since roots are visible through the translucent milk jug, there is no need to pull cuttings to check their progress. Remove any leaves that fall ... the cutting can still root without leaves. As long as the stem is green, the cutting is alive.

When the cutting is showing strong roots, and starts to sprout new leaves, begin to harden off your new rose by removing the screw top of the soda bottle. After a week or two, remove the soda bottle completely and begin to gradually move your rose to a sunnier environment.