

Extension Notes

Horticulture

Beth Wilson
Pulaski County Extension Office

Layering Around at Home

Propagating plants can be an easy, fun activity. Some plants are so easy to propagate while others can give you fits. Making copies of plants, called asexual propagation, is readily done on many houseplants. If you've never tried it, I highly encourage you to try.

There are many ways to make copies of plants. Wandering Jew (*Tradescantia* spp.), just take a clipping and put it in water. In a few weeks, you'll have a root system ready to plant. African violets (*Saintpaulia ionantha*) – take a leaf cutting and stick the petiole (the leaf stem) in some media, and in just a month or so, a new plant emerges. Small cuttings can be stuck in media, misted, and kept warm and in a month or better, you have a rooted cutting.

Layering is a specific type of asexual propagation that many of you may not have ever tried. It's only a little destructive to the mama plant. But many times we have plants that get overgrown – these are perfect for air layering.

Air layering is rooting a new plant while the stem is still attached to the parent plant. Here's the step-by-step methodology:

- Remove all leaves several inches on each side of the point where the layer is to be made
- From the center of the layering area, make a slanting cut upward an inch or more long and about halfway through the branch. A preferred method of wounding is removing a strip of bark (bark isn't always present) 0.5 to 1 inch wide around the branch.
- Apply a rooting compound to the wounded surface or cut
- If a cut has been made, don't let it heal. Insert a small piece of wood like a toothpick in the cut to keep the wound open.
- Take a handful of long-fiber sphagnum peat moss that has been soaked in water and squeeze out the excess water. Pack moist peat moss around the branch to cover the wound.

- Cover the ball of moist moss with clear plastic wrap. Wrap the plastic around the moss so that it overlaps and will not allow the moss to dry out. Clear plastic permits you to see when roots have developed.
- Secure the plastic at each end with tape, string, or other fasteners. It will usually take a month or more for roots to appear.
- Once roots appear, cut the stem just below the roots and plant the rooted stem tip.

Air layering works well for rubber tree, croton, diffenbachia, dracaena, Norfolk Island pine, and schefflera.

For more information, call the Pulaski County Extension office at 679-6361. Become a fan of [Pulaski County Horticulture](#) on Facebook and/or follow [@hortagentbeth](#) on Twitter.

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http://statebystategardening.com/state.php/va/articles/air_layering_a_makeover_for_overgrown_houseplants/





