



# Propagation 2 - Cuttings

**Overview/Description:** Students will take cuttings of different plants to create new plants.

**Big Idea:** Living things make new living things - there are different ways to grow new plants.

**Grade Level:** Any

**Lesson Time:** 30 min

**Season:** Spring, Fall

**Type of Activity:** Science, General Garden Task

**Materials Needed:** A variety of Living Plants: Woody Herbs: Rosemary, Thyme, Sage, Lavender; Grape Vines, Soil, Planting Pots, Soil Scoops, Table, Scissors or Pruners, Pencils, Old Window Blinds (for labels).

**Preparation:** Set up work table. Set out soil scoops, planting pots, labels. Have potting soil in large tubs or wheelbarrows near the table. For large groups provide multiple tubs of soil.

## What to do:

- In the Opening Circle, ask: *Do trees and plants live forever? "No..." So if all the plants and trees are dying, why aren't they all gone by now? "Cuz they grow new ones..." Yes, and this is called Propagation. What are different ways plants propagate themselves?*
- Today we are going to create new plants by taking cuttings - a piece of a parent plant will grow roots and form a new plant. It is OK if this just seems like magic, by the way - it basically is.
- Students roam the garden taking cuttings of appropriate plants. Use scissors or pruners to cut sprigs 4"-6"; choose branches that look new and healthy, not old and woody. Bring cuttings back to the work table.
- Fill 6" or larger pots with potting soil.
- For Woody Herbs:
  - **Remove leaves from the bottom half** of the cutting with your fingers.
  - **Slip cuttings into the soil** up to the leaves, several per pot, spaced 3" apart. Pack soil down around stem. Later, when roots have formed, you will transplant them each into their own pot.
- For Grapes:
  - **Save winter prunings** from grapes for this activity (or ask LCSG - we have some for you!).
  - With pruners, students **cut 12"- 18" sections of cane**. Sections with nodes (bumps, buds) spaced more closely are better. Each cutting needs to have a minimum of two nodes. Bottom cut is square; top cut is angled (not crucial).
  - **Slip cuttings into soil**. Two nodes should be "underground".
  - **Label** (not just "Grapes" - what is the variety?)
- Keep them in the shade, so they can focus more on roots than leaves.
- NOTE: Do more cuttings than you need - not all will root and survive!
- Students can **cut up old window blinds** with scissors to make labels. Pencil won't fade like Sharpies do.
- Lots of things can be done with your new collection of rooted plants: Send home with students, have a plant sale for a garden fundraiser, give to another school garden...
- Other plants to try: willow, forsythia, fig, hazelnut (filbert), star magnolia

## Teaching Points:

- How do plants make more plants?
- Definitions: Plant Propagation = the process of creating new plants. Nodes = the bumps on branches where a leaf or stem will emerge.

**Additional Resources:** <http://www.bunchgrapes.com/cuttings.html>