

Propagating Roses

Starting Roses From Cuttings Using The "Oasis" Method

by [Jeri Jennings](#)

There are almost as many WAYS to start new rose plants from cuttings as there are Rosarians WANTING to do it. I travel in a motor home, and often take cuttings in odd places while on the road. This method uses Oasis Floral Foam, (or equivalent), and I've adapted the basic technique to suit my own needs and circumstances. The use of floral foam allows you to leave newly-formed roots undisturbed when moving the cutting to a pot, thus eliminating one of the big sources of failure.

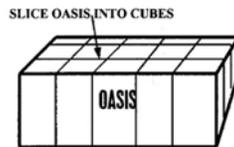
MATERIALS:

- Flower stems which have bloomed
- Oasis Flower Foam (the kind made for LIVE floral arrangements) or equivalent
- 1 Qt. Plastic Water or Soda Bottle
- 1.5 Pt. Plastic Water or Soda Bottle
- Exacto Knife with sharp blade
- Oasis Flower Foam (or equivalent)
- LIQUID Rooting Hormone

Step 1. CUT OASIS INTO PIECES

The original instructions I read for this method suggested pieces 2-in. x 2-in. in size. The floral foam available locally did not cut economically into that size.

Each brick of foam is 3 in. across x 6-in. long, 2 5/8-in. from top to bottom. I make one lengthwise cut and four cross-wise cuts to produce 10 tall rectangular pieces of equal size.



Step 2. THOROUGHLY SOAK OASIS IN WATER UNTIL IT DOES NOT FLOAT.

This may take some hours, and you cannot hurry the process by holding the Oasis under water.

Step 3. CUT A FLOWER STEM OF ABOUT 8 INCHES IN LENGTH, WITH THREE OR MORE BUD EYES.

Cut off the bloom. Remove all but the top two leaf sets.

Plants must have roots to grow. Your cutting has been removed from its roots, and it is your object to persuade it to grow new ones. (To succeed, the cutting must grow roots BEFORE it grows foliage.) New roots will grow most easily from bud eyes (where leaf sets were attached, so it is good to have more than one of these "under-ground." To supplement the bud eyes, use your SHARP Exacto Knife to **GENTLY** slice the lower end of the cutting in two or three areas. These light, clean cuts provide openings that allow rooting hormone to enter the plant tissues. Avoid crushing damage to the cambium layer of the cutting.

Step 4. GENTLY PUSH THE CUTTING INTO THE OASIS, ALMOST TO THE BOTTOM.

As much of the stem as possible should be inside the Oasis - some rosarians insert it at an angle, in order to "bury" more of it. If your stem is thin, use a piece of wire or the like to make a pathway for it, to avoid breakage.



Step 5. CUT DOWN A 24-OZ. WATER BOTTLE TO 4 INCHES FROM THE BOTTOM.

We've also used cheap plastic water glasses for this purpose.

Step 6. PLACE THE OASIS, WITH THE CUTTING, INTO THE WATER BOTTLE OR GLASS. FILL WITH WATER, UNTIL HALF OF THE OASIS IS COVERED.

Step 7. PLACE CUTTING, IN OASIS, IN FILTERED LIGHT. KEEP THE WATER CONSTANTLY AT THE SAME LEVEL.

Step 8. CULTIVATE PATIENCE. NICE WHITE ROOTS WILL APPEAR THROUGH THE OASIS IN ANYWHERE FROM 3 WEEKS TO 3 MONTHS.

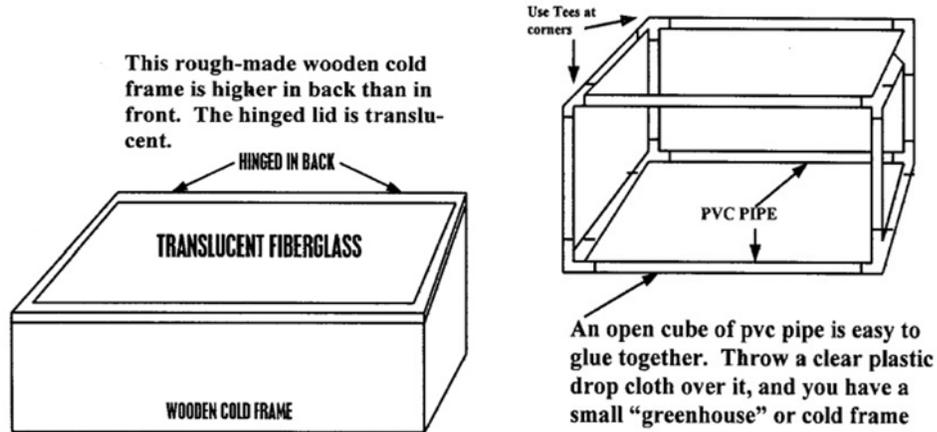
If your cutting withers and turns black, it's dead. If it remains green and plump, it is alive, so don't give up if you see no changes. Remember, it's really ROOTS you want to see, not leaves.

Step 9. WHEN ROOTS ARE SUBSTANTIAL, PLANT THE WHOLE UNIT - STEM, OASIS, AND ALL, IN A 1-GAL. POT OR SIMILAR. DO NOT ATTEMPT TO REMOVE THE CUTTING FROM THE OASIS. LEAVE THE ROOTS UNDISTURBED.

When roots start growing out of the bottom of the one-gallon pot, move the plant up to a 5-Gal. Pot, or plant it in the ground. Congratulations! You have a new rose plant.

Additional Thoughts . . .

Your cutting needs a high-humidity environment. For the most part, we root cuttings in a rough **cold frame**. We built it ourselves, and it's NOT fancy, but it does have a hinged, translucent lid to allow in filtered light. The cold frame sits on an old redwood picnic table, so air flows through the slats of the table, and between the boards of the cold frame. The environment is humid, but not sealed. A friend made a "cold frame" out of pvc pipe, and draped translucent plastic sheeting over it, with equally good results. We use a misting nozzle daily, to assure that the humidity level stays up



Perhaps you just want to start one or two cuttings. In this case, we might use a small plastic glass, or the bottom 4 inches of a 24-Oz. Water bottle to hold the Oasis and water. Cut the BOTTOM out of a larger bottle - say a 1.5-Liter water or soda bottle. The big bottle should fit right over the top of the smaller bottle, Oasis, and cutting., forming a small "greenhouse" which can be set on a windowsill in filtered light, where you can monitor it daily.

Want to be even MORE casual? Put the cutting in its cup, on a windowsill near your kitchen sink. Use a spray bottle to mist the cutting every time you wash dishes.

Your cutting also needs: **Growth Hormones** (auxins), **Bright Light** (to trigger photosynthesis, so that new roots will grow), and **Warmth** (if it's too hot, the moisture level will drop. If it's too cold, growth slows, and the cutting may rot).

GROWTH HORMONES: USE A LIQUID – **OR EVEN BETTER, A GEL** – HORMONE, NOT A POWDER. P.J. McMurdy, of Plano, TX, notes that use of hormones is *"probably the most misunderstood of all the processes"* involved in starting cuttings. Plant tissues naturally contain growth hormones (auxins) but a hormone compound will give them some extra *"oomph."* A liquid or gel enters plant tissues immediately, accelerating root formation. Powders do not act this efficiently. Check the product label! Your rooting hormone should contain equal amounts of naphthaleneacetic acid (NAA) indolebutyric acid (IBA).

Success Rate: Your mileage may vary. We have better success with fall cuttings, and we can average 40-50% success rate at that time of the year. This is partially because we stay home to take care of them, and partially because roots grow well in our very mild winters. Summer cuttings often fall victim to laziness, and hot dry wind.

Finally, cuttings from neglected old plants may be infested with insects or fungus. Washing them carefully, and removing all "livestock," will also help to increase your chance of success.

Original Source Material:

"Starting Rose Cuttings In Oasis" from Empire Rose Society "Rose News," Rachel Wall, Editor

"Rooting Roses - The Bottom Line" P.J. McMurdy, Plano, TX, originally published on the ARS Web Site