

**Houseplant Propagation is Fun and Easy**  
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Recently, a sample of a houseplant was brought into my office for identification. I had never seen this plant before and enlisted some expert help by sending digital photographs of the sample to some other extension educators. When the results came back I was surprised to find out that the sample was of a plant known as “purple waffle plant”. I read a little on the plant and became interested in having one of my very own, so I placed the sample in a jar of water on my desk and low and behold it now has roots.

Purple waffle plant (*Hemigraphis 'Exotica'*) as well as many other houseplants, is very easy to propagate using simple propagation methods. I thought it might be fun to share with my readers a little about houseplant propagation and how to increase your supply of houseplants or share some houseplants with friends. Some plants that are easy to propagation include; spider plant (*Chlorophytum comosum*), snake plant (*Sansevieria trifasciata*), Swedish ivy (*Plectranthus australis*), heart-leaf philodendron (*Philodendron scandens oxycardium*), and wandering Jew (*Zebrina pendula*) for propagation by cuttings.

Cuttings (also known as slips) can be taken from most houseplants anytime during the year. Cut off a portion of the stem and leaves about 4 or 5 inches long, 3 or 4 nodes should be present for a good cutting. A node is where leaves are attached to the stem. Remove the leaves on the bottom two nodes and “stick” in a mixture of half peat and half perlite. You may want to use a rooting powder to initiate rooting. Rooting powders (hormone powders) can be purchased at most garden centers. Dip the bottom of the cutting in water for a few seconds then in the powder to coat the cut end. Insert the cut end into the soil media. From here keep the cuttings moist as high humidity is important for rooting. Once roots are present repot and enjoy your new plant.

Care for most houseplants is similar as their requirements for light, water, temperature, and fertilizer are similar. Plants used as houseplants have been selected for adaptability inside the home. Most houseplants require medium (or indirect) light, moist soil allowing drying slightly before watering again, room temperature between 65 and 75 degrees, and fertilize only during the summer. Yes, there are exceptions to these suggestions; it is important to know what your particular plant requires. You can always give me a call and I can help you with any questions.

Houseplants can provide many years of satisfaction for those of us who have a green thumb and even for those of us who do not. They also help to clean the air in our homes. Research done by NASA looking at houseplants to clean the air on the space shuttle found that plants significantly reduce air born pollutants. Houseplants never cease to amaze me in how they function and reproduce. With a little knowledge and patience you can grow many different plants and enjoy them all year long both indoors and out.

If you have additional questions about houseplants or plant propagation you can call me at 605-394-2188 or e-mail me at [ricky.abrahamson@sdstate.edu](mailto:ricky.abrahamson@sdstate.edu). You may wish to visit us online at [www.co.pennington.sd.us/extension/extsvc.html](http://www.co.pennington.sd.us/extension/extsvc.html) for additional information and workshop offerings from the extension office.