

Tuesday Afternoon Session, December 6, 1977

Dr. Emino, moderator of the morning session also served as moderator for the first portion of the afternoon session. Mr. Duke Biscotti then served as moderator for the second portion of the afternoon program.

PROPAGATION OF *POTENTILLA*

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Potentilla, also known as cinquefoil, is a member of the rose family. It is used as a rock garden plant or in borders or group plantings. *Potentilla fruticosa* is one of the most commonly grown species of its genus. The name potentilla was originally given to this group because of its potency as a medicine. Since fevers were often blamed on evil spirits, a medicine that reduced fever was looked upon as a potent against evil spirits. The name potentilla, a diminutive for powerful, arose from this belief. Most *Potentilla fruticosa* is hardy to Zone 2. Fruticosa is the latin word for shrubby, which describes the growth habit of this deciduous, densely leafy shrub, much branched and with bright yellow flowers (some have white or red flowers).

Potentilla is propagated by division, seeds and cuttings. Cuttings are by far the most economical commercial method; it is this method of propagation which will be discussed exclusively in this article.

Cuttings may be taken any time from early summer through fall. A cutting is taken from the current year's growth, 4 to 6 inches long (longer cuttings have also proven to be successful). Cuttings are gathered in the early morning and stored in sealed plastic bags in a refrigerator until time to be processed. The lower leaves are removed from the cuttings (to prevent rotting). A new 45° angle cut is made and the cutting is dipped in hormone powder (the most commonly used powder at Weston Nurseries is Hormo Root B with Thiram). The treated cuttings are then stuck in a 50% peat and perlite mixture, either in flats or in a greenhouse bench. Bottom heat at about 75°F hastens rooting. Mist is used sparingly, — about 6 sec/10 min, depending on the weather. No mist is used at all on overcast or rainy days, to prevent mildew problems. Cuttings root in about 6 weeks. The rooted cuttings are removed from the bench when

the rootball is about the size of a quarter, and are flatted in a soil mixture of equal parts peat, perlite and bark.

Cuttings taken in early summer can be planted directly out in beds. Care must be taken to provide the young plants with daily watering and shading from direct sunlight. The beds should be covered with hay or some other form of protection for the winter. Poison bait of some type should be placed at intervals under the hay. Rooted cuttings that have been flatted may be overwintered in cold frames covered with hay, or covered with poly or sash, using some form of rodent poison. Cuttings may be kept in a poly tent where the temperature doesn't go below freezing. An alpine house has also been used successfully for overwintering these cuttings. The hay or other winter protection should be removed early in the spring. Cold frames and alpine houses must be ventilated on sunny days, to obtain good air circulation.

Potentilla fruticosa cultivars grown successfully by Weston Nurseries using this method include: 'Arbuscula'; 'Gold Cup', 'Jackmannii'; 'Katherine Dykes', 'Klondyke', 'Longacre', 'Mandshurica', 'Maanelys' (syn. 'Moonlight'), 'Primrose Beauty', 'Tangerine'. A new cultivar from England, soon to be distributed in this country is *Potentilla fruticosa* 'Red Ace'.

PROPAGATING FRENCH HYBRID LILACS BY SOFTWOOD CUTTINGS

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Lilacs have been reproduced asexually for centuries. The methods used have varied greatly from continent to continent and from nursery to nursery. Many nurseries prefer to propagate their lilacs by root-grafting onto understocks of *Ligustrum*, or *Fraxinus*, while others prefer to propagate them from suckers, or divisions. At Cherry Hill Nurseries, Inc., located in the northeastern corner of Massachusetts, about 4 to 5 miles from the ocean, we have found that a softwood cutting procedure works well.

TIMING

The single most important factor in the success or failure in the rooting of softwood cuttings of French hybrid lilacs, is the time the cutting material is collected. In our latitude this operation begins around May 25 and continues until the end of June.