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### **1982 IPPS ORDINARY NATIONAL DIPLOMA PRIZE**

(Two students, Hilary Schonbeck and Tracy Lunn, shared the 1982 award presented by the G.B.&I. Region for the best Ordinary National Diploma in Horticulture student project. The reports of their projects follow).

### **IS STRIPPING OF CUTTINGS NECESSARY?**

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This project was secondary to a main college project, and I decided to examine the need for stripping cuttings before insertion, as the topic had been questioned at last year's Conference. As it had to commence in September, of necessity I worked with evergreens, but did do some successful work with soft-woods.

I questioned the three main reasons normally given for stripping cuttings, and my findings were as follows:

(1) "The lower leaves decay and this decay spreads to the stem."

Largely this was not true. Either there was no decay (examples *Spiraea* × *bumalda* 'Goldflame', *Viburnum tinus* and *Hebe* 'Eversley Seedling') or decay did not spread (examples, *Pernettya mucronata*, *Erica herbacea* (Syn.: *carnea*), and *Elaeagnus pungens* 'Maculata'). An exception was autumn struck *Ceanothus*, where decay from decaying stems did not spread to the stem.

(2) "Cuttings are difficult to insert."

This statement is true of large, thick-leaved species such as *Rhododendron* and *Skimmia*. It even takes longer to insert unstripped cuttings of heathers, *Pernettya*, etc., but this time

factor is more than equalled by time taken to strip the cuttings. It depends on composts; I used peat blocks which hold cuttings well, but there is possibly a problem with peat/perlite composts.

I concluded that one need not strip small leaves, but big leaves must be stripped if there is a problem of insertion.

(3) "Wounding aids rooting."

Most cuttings root quite well from the base. Others will root from nodes either when the leaves are still present, e.g. *Viburnum tinus*, or when the leaves have decayed, e.g. *Pernettya mucronata*. Maybe wounds will allow pathogens to enter and accelerate decay. I found *Elaeagnus pungens* 'Maculata' rooted better when not stripped. An exception was *Hebe rakaiensis*, which rooted mostly from leafless nodes.

My reasons for not stripping:

*Time saved* — it is possible to miss out an operation. Cuttings of the required length can be removed from the stock plant and dipped in a hormone and inserted. Time in the preparation shed is avoided.

*Discomfort avoided* — prickly species such as *Berberis* and *Pyracantha* are painful to handle, so the less handling the better. Less time is wasted examining wounds.

*Better aeration around the stem* — a bigger hole is made when cuttings are inserted with leaves, and the compost is propped open allowing more oxygen at the base for rooting. Examples are spring struck *Ceanothus*, heather, *Pernettya*, *Berberis*, and *Viburnum tinus*.

**Conclusions.** Do a pilot test before embarking on anything, because nature is so variable.

Consider the characteristics of the plant; i.e. susceptibility to decay, size of leaves, rooting habits, thorniness, ease of stripping with a knife or fingers.

## **STUDIES IN THE PROPAGATION OF CERTAIN DECIDUOUS ORNAMENTALS BY HARDWOOD CUTTINGS**

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The object of my project was to compare the effects of different rooting composts and rooting hormone treatments for *Acer palmatum* 'Osakazuki', *Hibiscus syriacus* 'Woodbridge', and *Magnolia* × *soulangiana*.