

Propagating *Sassafras albidum* from Root Shoots

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Sassafras albidum is an attractive native tree in the Northeastern U.S. not commonly available in the trade. It can be trained to a single stem, often forming thickets when growing in the wild. While it can be propagated both from seed and cuttings, we have found this root-shoot method simple and efficient, as well as effective in clonal production of selected individuals.

When an established sassafras thicket is cut down and mowed, shoots continue to come up in profusion for many years from the dense root system. Gently tugging on the 6- to 10-in.-long shoots in June separates them from their roots. At the bottom of the shoot is a white to pink area of the stem from which new roots have proven to generate quickly, given the proper conditions. This rooted "cutting", transplanted to a container, rapidly grows to become a uniform, vigorous, 2-ft-tall plant within about 3 years.

We dip the bottom inch of the just-pulled shoot in a 1 : 20 (v/v) solution of Dip 'n Gro and water for about 5 sec. These are direct stuck in plug trays or pots. Trays are placed for several weeks in a fog propagation house until they are well rooted and can be held in a cold house for the winter to be potted the next spring. Our Mee Fog Generating System is set at 1 min every 6 min and adjusted for weather changes.

Rooting Medium:

- 6 ft³ pine bark mulch
- 6 ft³ sphagnum peatmoss
- 12 ft³ horticultural perlite
- 2 lbs ground limestone
- 1 lbs AquaGro 2000 G

In the spring of the next year rooted plants from the plug trays are planted into #2 pots. Most growth this year occurs in the roots, with the tops growing slowly. During the second year in #2 pots the top growth becomes vigorous; the plants are about 2 ft tall by mid summer, and the roots have filled the container. This plant can then be sold, shifted to a larger container or used as a liner for field production to produce a mature tree.

Medium for #2 Pots:

- 2 parts composted bark
- 1 part sharp sand
- 1 part leaf compost
- 8 lbs per yard Sierra High N 24N-4P₂O₅-8K₂O