

PROPAGATION OF CODIAEUMS (CROTONS) BY TIP CUTTINGS

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Because of our climatic conditions in southeast Queensland, we find that glasshouse grown container stock is superior to open ground cultivation. Our average summer temperature range from 65° to 85°F and winter 45° to 70°F. We can maintain a minimum of 65°F night temperature during the winter months, which permits year-round propagation, and we can have closer control of pests and diseases. The main pests are mealy bug and red spider. We root tip cuttings from 12 mon old well-coloured stock. At peak propagation times we also use younger stock. Tip cuttings are used in preference to node cuttings as these provide a good quality plant quickly.

The removal of the tip of 3-4 leaves causes the next 3 or 4 nodes to break out on the stock plant. These then provide us with our next tip cuttings, yielding not 1, but 3 or 4 tip cuttings in approximately 6 weeks. On an average we can produce 60-80 tip cuttings per plant in a 12 mon period depending on growth habit of the cultivar.

Our propagation medium consists of river sand, peatmoss and perlite (1:1:1 v/v) sterilized at 145°F for 30 min. This mix is used in preference to 1:1 perlite, peat, not because it is superior, but because of economics. Each cutting is struck in 2" propagating tubes in trays of 100, each having been dipped in hormone powder. Trays are initially watered by hand and placed on heated misting benches, which have a dressing of river sand. Both heating cables and mist are electronically controlled. Bottom heat at 85°F and mist ensure growth and moisture retention. The light requirements are about 70% shade. After 14-16 days of these conditions they have callused and have roots 1/2 to 3/4 inch long. These are taken from the mist controlled area and are given slightly harder conditions for a period of 2 weeks at least, depending on availability of space. These are then ready for tube sales or potting on to larger containers in 6 to 7 weeks from propagation time. In summing up we find that we can produce a saleable item in a 5-inch container in 14 weeks from propagation.