Practical Rooting Trays

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We utilize the plastic bulb trays used to ship bulbs from Holland to North America. The bulbs are used in greenhouses for forcing and as it is too expensive to return the trays, they are sold here for $3 (Cdn.) or less. The size of the tray is 60 cm × 40 cm × 18 cm (23.6 inches × 15.7 inches × 7 inches). All of our softwood propagation in the summer is done in these trays. They are filled approximately 9 cm (3.54 inches) with perlite. Depending on the leaf size of the cutting, the trays contain 150, 95, or 75 cuttings.

The cuttings are made about 13 cm (5.1 inches) in length making sure that they do not stick out over the top of the tray. This makes it easier to stack them later. Cuttings are treated with 0.8% IBA powder. Misting is controlled by an electronic leaf sensor. After rooting the cuttings are hardened off.

In November after the leaves have fallen off and the cuttings have been treated with a fungicide, the trays are stacked up to 12 high in a cold storage at 1C; they will remain there until approximately the end of May.

The advantages to using this system are:

1) Inexpensive durable trays;
2) Highly mobile;
3) Light weight;
4) Due to the bottom perforation of the trays the cutting roots are air pruned.

Innovation in Propagation

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INTRODUCTION

How do you recognize a propagator in a crowd? Among other things, you look at his or her hands, and, on careful examination, you will see scars on their fingers from cuts made when they learned to graft and make cuttings. Upon talking to them further, you will hear of their successes of 200% rooting, and 120% catches!! But also, you will hear of their ongoing battles with certain plants and their undeserved failures.

At one time, we grew tree roses. In order to protect them during the winter, we would bend them down and cover the budded 1.25-m stems with soil. This was cumbersome, but if we could protect the buds from windburn, we would be successful in growing standard roses.

I started with a Kotex® pad, and eventually wound up with a bookmailer — a thick-walled Kraft envelope. The Kotex sanitary pad got a lot of laughs, but later on was used successfully as a moisture-carrying insert in the hot callous tube.

The Kotex pads come pre-glued. They are laid end-to-end on a pipe, and inserted