

## August Field Planting of June Stuck Softwood Cuttings®

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At Mariani Nursery most of our summer softwood propagation is rooted in sand beds in greenhouses. We also have a greenhouse with a concrete floor with hot water tubes embedded in the concrete. This house was built specifically for winter evergreen propagation. In an effort to increase our softwood production without building another greenhouse and also to make use of the evergreen house during the summer months we developed a new production method, which I will share here.

The plants we chose for this system were all plants that would root fast so that we could transplant them by the middle of August. Genera that have worked consistently over the past 3 years are *Spiraea*, *Cornus*, *Physocarpus*, and *Rosa*. Genera that rooted well for us but didn't transplant well under this system were *Rhus* and *Hydrangea*.

Cuttings are taken in June and stuck in 32-count trays in a bagged commercial soil mix and set on the floor under mist. The cuttings root in about 3 weeks and are immediately put on a liquid feed program. Plants are pruned two to three times prior to transplanting.

By the middle of August plants are ready to transplant to the field. We spend a day pulling the rooted plugs out of the trays and laying them in baskets lined with a plastic bag. The baskets are put in a cooler set at 55 °F and left over night. Early the next day we start planting the plugs in the field using a three-row bed transplanter. As soon as a block is planted, about 25,000 plants, we water the plants in well with an Ag-rain water reel. We get over 90% stands using this method. The plants are harvested bare root the following fall. The spireas are a good 12–15 inches wide and the *Cornus* and *Physocarpus* are a good 24–48 inches high depending on the plant.