Philodendrons Galore

If you have this common house plant at home, try this experiment—if you don’t, use a begonia or another plant.

What to do: Cut the stem off the plant below the leaf scar or the bulge, which is called the node, as in the illustration. Remove the side leaves. Place the piece of philodendron in the jar of water. Make sure the water covers the spot where the leaves were pulled off. Now you must wait patiently for roots to develop. It may take several weeks for good root growth.

What happens: Long brown, threadlike roots form from the scarred areas where the leaves were removed.

Why: Some plants can grow from roots, leaves and stems. Philodendron sections or stems, called cuttings, that are placed in water will grow roots from the leaf areas around the bulge or node. Geraniums and other plants also do this, so if yours didn’t work, don’t give up. Try again.

Planting Seeds and Seedlings

Plant cuttings that have rooted, seeds, and seedlings, can be planted or moved into soil. Easy enough, but some rules must be followed.

For seeds to start growing and plants to grow well they need water—but not too much (they’ll "drown" from lack of air) or too little (they’ll dry out and die). Good light and soil with the proper minerals are also needed to boost growth.

First, plant seeds, seedlings, and new plants in clay or plastic pots with drainage holes in the bottom. (Egg and milk cartons with holes punched in them also make great planters.) Adding bits of broken clay pots, gravel, or stones also helps the water drain. Use a good potting soil with equal parts of peat moss, sand, bark, wood, and a good nitrogen and iron content.

Containers should be nearly filled and plantings should be given "elbow room" away from other seeds, seedlings, or plants. In other words, don’t crowd! A light covering of soil, about 1/4 inch (1 cm), should cover seeds or seedling roots and be lightly compressed, or pressed down. New plantings should be placed in a sunny, south-facing window, and the soil should be kept moist. A small sprayer or medicine dropper might deliver just the right amount of water and help prevent over-watering.