B.E.S.T. in horticulture have developed a set of horticultural standards to define what might reasonably be expected when carrying out a range of specific horticultural tasks. They incorporate aspects such as health & safety, sustainability, best practice and equality and diversity. These standards are not designed to preclude alternative actions (if considered good horticultural practice), but to provide a common approach to delivering teaching and learning, and as a tool for standardisation of the assessment process. All stakeholders are invited to provide feedback directly to the author, [tonydavies@bestinhorticulture.co.uk](mailto:tonydavies@bestinhorticulture.co.uk) which can be used to improve the standard.

**Horticultural Standard for propagation 2. Softwood cuttings.**

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| **Tools, equipment, and materials –** Pots or trays suitable for subject to be propagated, striking board, presser board (if required), suitable propagation media or ingredients to mix one, secateurs, knife, tile, alcohol/sterilant solution, paper towels, appropriate rooting hormone powder, bucket, access to water, polyethylene bag, trug for waste material. |
| **PPE –** Sensible workwear and footwear, work gloves for handling hazardous plants. |

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| **Element** | **Action and indication of importance**  **(RAG rating, red = critical, amber = essential,**  **green = desirable).** | |
| Health & Safety. | Candidate dressed appropriately for task. Suitable clothing, sensible footwear, and appropriate gloves if plants are hazardous. |  |
| Prepare propagation media and fill containers/trays. | Collect propagation media or propagation media ingredients for blending. |  |
| Break down propagation media and aerate or mix ingredients in correct ratio to produce a suitable propagation media. |  |
| Fill suitable containers or trays (for the subject), levelling as appropriate. |  |
| Water containers or trays before use and allow to drain (if required). |  |
| Clean work area and layout equipment and materials ready for propagation. | Clean work area, remove and dispose of any debris. |  |
| Lay out equipment and materials so they can be utilised efficiently. |  |
| Clean tile with alcohol/sterilant solution (if it is used for preparing cuttings). |  |
| Clean tools before use. | Pruning equipment cleaned before use with a suitable biocide. |  |
| Identify plants and suitable method of propagation. | Identify by generic name the plant(s) to be propagated. |  |
| Specify a suitable method of propagating the subject. |  |
| Identify suitable propagation material for the type of cutting to be made. |  |

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| **Element** | **Action and indication of importance**  **(RAG rating, red = critical, amber = essential,**  **green = desirable).** | |
| Check mother plant. | Check name of the plant, ensure it is true to type, true to form and free from pests, diseases, and disorders. |  |
| Remove suitable material from mother plant. | Remove only suitable material from mother plant cleanly with secateurs. |  |
| Place harvested material in bucket with water or polyethylene bag (depending on type of material and ambient temperatures). |  |
| Leave mother plant in good condition, no snags or torn material liable to infection. |  |
| Sort propagation material. | Sort through propagation material and reject any unsuitable material that may have been harvested. |  |
| Prepare propagules. | Examine each piece of material for damage from pests, disease, or disorders before preparation. |  |
| Determine appropriate length for propagule in relation to container, trays, and propagation facility. |  |
| Cut underneath a node (if nodal). |  |
| Remove tip (if not a tip cutting). |  |
| Remove any side shoots cleanly on bottom half of the cutting, leaving no snags. |  |
| Remove leaves cleanly on bottom half of the cutting, removing all the petiole and stipule. |  |
| All propagules produced are balanced (top to stem ratio) and uniform. |  |
| Insertion into growing media | Base of cutting dipped in rooting hormone powder. |  |
| Hole made first with a suitable tool, if cutting soft and liable to break. |  |
| Cutting inserted to appropriate depth. Foliage kept above surface if present. |  |
| Cutting firmed up and remains upright. |  |
| Container / tray labelled. | Label inserted with name of subject, date and initials of the person who carried out the activity. |  |
| Container / tray watered. | Tray is watered with a watering can and a fine rose. Propagules checked to ensure they were not displaced. |  |
| Discuss best environment. | The best propagation environment for success is discussed. |  |
| Discuss aftercare. | Appropriate aftercare is discussed e.g., daily check, remove any fallen leaves, dead cuttings and application of fungicide. |  |
| Clean tools after use. | Propagation equipment cleaned after use with a suitable biocide. |  |
| Cleaning workstation and putting away tools and equipment. | Workstation is cleaned. |  |
| The tools and equipment were put away and surplus containers / trays returned to the store. |  |