Agriculture Academy's

Growing Protea Cuttings

Agriculture Academy

How to Grow Proteas from Cuttings

Thank you for downloading this guide!

If you are wondering how to grow proteas from cuttings, then this is the perfect guide for you!

As a part of our series on protea propagation, we are going to show you how to grow these plants from cuttings! We are going to use a Leucospermum, or pincushion, species for our demonstration. This shrub is a member of the proteaceae family and is one of many plants that make up the fynbos vegetation in Southern Africa.

What You Will Need To Get Started

• The protea species of your choice

• Sharp secateurs or scissors

• Rooting hormone

• Cutting trays

• Rooting medium

• For the best rooting medium specifically tailored to the needs of protea cuttings, mix 2 parts river sand with 1 part peat moss. The river sand will provide excellent drainage and aeration while the peat moss will retain enough moisture to promote root growth.

Drainage & aeration

2 parts river sand: 1 part peat moss

Moisture retention
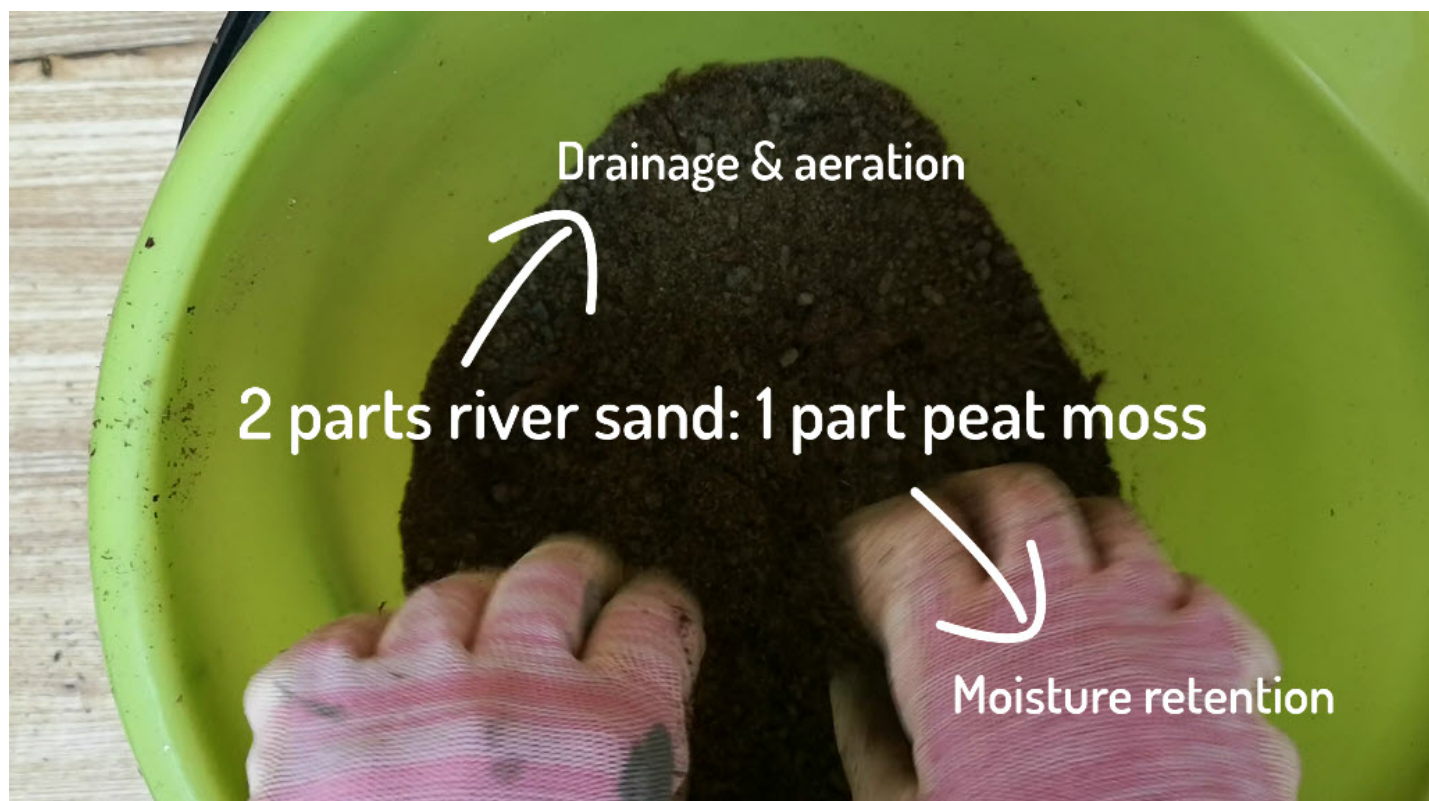
Rules for Taking Cuttings

Before you start cutting the stems, make sure your trays are filled with your rooting medium. This will limit the time between cutting and planting, preventing unnecessary water loss and dehydration.

Once you have filled your trays, you can take your cuttings. To choose the best stems to cut, follow these rules:

1. Only use mother plants who are **healthy and free from pathogens**, whether it be fungi, bacteria or insects. Any problems with the mother plant will be passed down to all the cuttings taken from it.

2. Make cuttings from **semi-hardened material**. You can test the hardness by gently bending the stems. If the stem can bend back and touch its base, then it is too soft. If the stem breaks easily, then it is too hard. Taking semi-hardened cuttings, like this shown here, will give you the best results.

3. Your cuttings should be about **5-10cm long** and have some leaves attached.

Too soft growth

Perfect growth

Planting Your Cuttings

After you have selected the best stems, take your cuttings from the base of the main stem. Cut the bottom of the stem at a 45° angle. This will increase the surface area to promote water and hormone uptake, as well as root formation. Remove the lower leaves with your secateurs or fingers. You can also gently scrape the outermost layer of the stem to further increase water uptake and root formation. Dip the lower third of the ends of the stems in rooting hormone and tap off the excess. Plant your stems into your growing medium. Give them a good spray with water until the medium is soaked. Keep your trays in a warm, humid area. A greenhouse with mist irrigation would be best, but if you do not have such a place then be sure to regularly spray your cuttings to prevent the medium from drying out. Depending on the temperature and irrigation strategy, roots should begin to form after 4 weeks or so.

Make cuts at 45 degree angles

Scraping stem bottoms

Planted cuttings in greenhouse

Tips for Growing Protea Cuttings

And that's how easy it is to grow proteas from cuttings! Here are our top tips for getting the most out of your cuttings:

Tip #1: If you are taking your cuttings a while before you are able to plant them, keep them wrapped in moist newspaper or kitchen towel and keep them in the fridge. This will prevent them from dehydrating and maintain their freshness!

Tip #2: To prevent disease proliferation, treat your cuttings with a fungicidal drench before planting. You can also soak your rooting medium with boiling water before you plant your cuttings. This is also a great way to determine whether or not your medium drains well. If you notice any waterlogging or pooling, you should amend your medium with river sand or perlite.

Tip #3: Do not plant your cuttings too close together. In their natural habitat, proteas grow in dry, well-drained soils. Try to mimic these conditions as much as possible by spacing the cuttings far apart in your trays. This promotes aeration and can help prevent disease proliferation, especially in humid greenhouses.

Rooted cutting