

How to Propagate *Aeschynomene sensitiva*



Tickle Me Pink: Propagating the Sensitive Joint Vetch (*Aeschynomene sensitiva*)

The plant world is full of surprises, and few are as captivating as the Sensitive Joint Vetch, scientifically known as *Aeschynomene sensitiva*. Don't let the scientific name intimidate you; this plant earns its common name with leaves that curl up at the slightest touch, much like the more famous *Mimosa pudica*. But this unique characteristic isn't the only thing that makes this plant special. Once you add its delicate pink flowers and relative ease of propagation to the mix, you have a recipe for a fascinating addition to any plant lover's collection.

If you're eager to bring home this intriguing plant, you'll be happy to know that *Aeschynomene sensitiva* can be propagated through two main methods:

1. Seeds – A Journey of Patience and Reward:

- **Source:** You can purchase *Aeschynomene sensitiva* seeds online or from specialty nurseries. However, due to the plant's unique nature, seeds might not always be readily available.
- **Preparation is Key:** The seeds have a hard outer coating that benefits from scarification. You can achieve this by gently rubbing the seed coat with sandpaper or nicking it with a nail clipper, being careful not to damage the inner seed. Soaking the seeds in warm water for 24 hours after scarification further improves germination rates.
- **Sowing Your Sensitive Friends:** Use a well-draining seed starting mix and sow the seeds about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch deep. Keep the soil consistently moist but not waterlogged.
- **Patience is a Virtue:** Germination can take anywhere from a few weeks to a couple of months. Providing warmth (around 70-75°F or 21-24°C) and humidity, perhaps with a humidity dome or plastic wrap over the seed tray, can speed things up.

2. Cuttings – A Faster Route to New Plants

- **The Cutting Edge:** Take stem cuttings in the spring or early summer when the plant is actively growing. Choose healthy stems that are about 4-6 inches long and have at least two sets of leaves.
- **Prepare for Success:** Remove the bottom set of leaves and dip the cut end in rooting hormone (this is optional but can improve success rates).
- **Planting Time:** Insert the cuttings into a well-draining potting mix, burying the node where the leaves were removed. Water gently and maintain moisture.
- **A Rooting Interest:** It takes about 3-4 weeks for the cuttings to root. You can check for root development by gently tugging on the cutting—resistance indicates roots are forming.

Caring for Your Sensitive Clones:

Regardless of your chosen propagation method, once your new plants are established, provide them with plenty of bright, indirect light and keep the soil evenly moist. These plants are relatively low-maintenance and can tolerate some drought, but they won't tolerate soggy conditions.

Aeschynomene sensitiva is a conversation starter, a tactile wonder, and a fantastic example of the diversity and ingenuity found in the plant kingdom. By propagating your own, you can share this unique plant with fellow plant enthusiasts and marvel at the wonders of nature right in your own home.