

How to Propagate *Arctostaphylos viscida*



Propagating Sticky Manzanita (*Arctostaphylos viscida*): A Gardener's Guide

Introduction:

Arctostaphylos viscida, commonly known as Sticky Manzanita, is a captivating evergreen shrub prized for its vibrant, dark-green foliage, attractive peeling bark, and profuse clusters of urn-shaped, pinkish flowers in spring. Native to California, it adds a unique and drought-tolerant element to gardens, particularly in landscapes mimicking its natural chaparral habitat. Its popularity among gardeners stems from its low maintenance needs and its stunning beauty, making propagation a desirable pursuit. However, Sticky Manzanita presents unique challenges due to its specific environmental requirements and somewhat recalcitrant nature.

Seed Germination:

Seed germination of *Arctostaphylos viscida* is possible but notoriously challenging. The seeds possess a hard seed coat which necessitates stratification to break dormancy. This process mimics the natural winter chilling period experienced by the seeds in their native habitat.

Challenges: Low germination rates are common even with proper stratification. Fungal diseases can also decimate seedlings if sanitation isn't meticulously maintained.

Practical Tips: Stratify seeds at 40°F (4°C) for 60-90 days prior to sowing. Sow in well-drained seed-starting mix, avoiding overwatering. Keep the mix consistently moist but not waterlogged. Use a fungicide to minimize disease risk.

Rewards: Successful seed germination offers significant genetic diversity within a population, leading to greater adaptability and hardiness. It also holds the potential for large-scale propagation, ideal for conservation efforts or creating diverse landscaping plantings.

Cuttings:

Propagating Sticky Manzanita from cuttings has proven to be a more reliable method than seed germination.

Challenges: The success rate is highly dependent on several factors including time of year (late spring or early summer is best), the use of rooting hormones, and the maintaining of proper humidity and temperature. Proper sanitation is also crucial to prevent fungal growth.

Practical Tips: Use semi-hardwood cuttings, approximately 4-6 inches long. Dip the cut ends in rooting hormone before planting in a well-draining rooting mix. Maintain high humidity using a humidity dome or propagation tray. Consistent misting is often beneficial.

Rewards: Cuttings typically exhibit faster growth than

seedlings and retain the characteristics of the parent plant. This method is ideal for smaller-scale propagation and maintaining desirable cultivars.

Division:

Division is generally not a practical method for propagating *Arctostaphylos viscida*. The plant's root system is extensive and deeply rooted, making division disruptive and difficult. Successful division requires a significantly mature and large plant, and even then, the success rate is low.

Tissue Culture:

While technically possible, tissue culture propagation of *Arctostaphylos viscida* is generally not a feasible option for the home gardener. This method requires specialized equipment, expertise, and sterile laboratory conditions, making it impractical for most propagators. It may, however, be employed by nurseries or research institutions for large-scale and specialized breeding purposes.

Conclusion:

Propagating Sticky Manzanita presents unique challenges regardless of the method employed. Seed germination is possible but offers relatively low success rates without careful stratification. Cuttings offer a more reliable route to propagation but require attention to detail regarding hormone use and humidity control. Division isn't practical. The rewarding aspect of successfully cultivating Sticky Manzanita lies not only in its beauty but also in the satisfaction of overcoming the inherent difficulties associated with its propagation. The effort invested is richly rewarded with the stunning addition of this iconic Californian shrub to your garden. Don't be discouraged by initial setbacks – persistence and careful attention to detail are key to success. Remember that even small successes contribute to the overall propagation effort and the preservation of this

magnificent species.