

How to Propagate Tropaeolum polyphyllum



From One to Many: Propagating the Show-Stopping Tropaeolum polyphyllum

The Tropaeolum polyphyllum, more affectionately known as the Flame Nasturtium, is a captivating climber that boasts a cascade of fiery orange blooms. This plant, native to the Andes Mountains of South America, isn't just beautiful; it's also relatively easy to propagate, allowing you to share its vibrant beauty with friends or grow a whole new patch of fiery splendor in your own garden.

But first, let's delve into the two main methods of propagation for Tropaeolum polyphyllum: **seed and cuttings**.

Starting from Seed: A Patient Gardener's Delight

Propagating from seeds is a simple process with a touch of patience involved. Here's how it works:

1. **Harvesting Seeds:** In autumn, the flame nasturtium produces seed pods. Allow these pods to fully ripen on the plant, then collect them before they shatter.
2. **Preparing Seeds:** Remove the seeds from the pods and spread them out on a paper towel to dry thoroughly. Cool, dry storage in a paper bag or airtight container will keep the seeds for up to five years.
3. **Sowing Seeds:** Spring is the ideal time for sowing. Direct seeding outdoors is the most common method. Sow the seeds about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch deep in well-drained soil. You can also start seedlings indoors in pots, but keep in mind that they don't tolerate transplanting well.

Tip: For a head start, consider starting seeds indoors a month before the last frost date.

Cutting Your Way to Success: A Faster Route

For those who want to see blooms sooner, propagating via cuttings is the way to go. This method harnesses the plant's natural ability to regrow from stem fragments:

1. **Taking Cuttings:** Choose healthy, non-flowering stems from the current season's growth. The optimal time for taking cuttings is spring or summer.
2. **Prepare the Cuttings:** Cut the stems at a 45-degree angle just below a leaf node (where a leaf emerges). Remove the lower leaves and dip the cut end in rooting hormone powder.
3. **Planting Cuttings:** Fill a pot with a good quality potting mix and make a small hole for each cutting. Gently insert the cutting and firm the soil around it.
4. **Care:** Maintain consistently moist soil and provide bright, indirect light. Root development takes around 4-6 weeks, and you should notice new growth emerging from the nodes.

Tips for Success

- **Soil Type:** Well-drained soil is crucial for *Tropaeolum polyphyllum*. A blend of equal parts of potting mix, coco coir, and perlite is ideal.
- **Light:** These plants thrive in full sun to partial shade.
- **Watering:** Keep the soil consistently moist while the plant is establishing itself. Avoid overwatering to prevent root rot.

The Joy of Propagating *Tropaeolum polyphyllum*

Propagating your own flame nasturtiums is a rewarding experience that lets you enjoy the vibrant blossoms for years to come. Whether you choose the patient path of growing from seed or the faster approach of cuttings, the effort is well worth the stunning display of color and beauty that these plants provide. So, roll up your sleeves, get your hands dirty, and let the propagation adventure begin!