

Propagation of *Trochodendron aralioides*[®]

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Native to Japan, Korea, and Taiwan, *Trochodendron aralioides*, the wheel tree, is a wonderful evergreen tree with a “tropical look” that’s hardy to U.S.D.A. Zone 6. It does better in partial shade than full sun and does require some summer moisture to look its best.

For the past 2 years I’ve been trying to propagate this plant from both seeds and cuttings. Following is a summary of my progress so far.

SEED PROPAGATION

The key to success seems to be fresh green seed. If the seed is picked after it has dried on the tree or allowed to dry before sowing few seeds will germinate. If the seed is picked when it is still green and sown immediately germination is excellent.

When the seed is green it cannot be easily extracted from the seed case and so we just break up the soft green seed capsules and sow everything. Do not try to separate out the minute seed or you will go blind!

Minute seeds produce minute seedlings! Covering with a shallow 1/4-inch layer of perlite seems to work very well, providing just enough protection for germination, but not impeding the growth of the new seedlings. **Key requirements: Fresh seed and good eyes! (The seed is minuscule.)**

CUTTING PROPAGATION

I have tried numerous propagation methods and times yet none have proved easier or better than the other. It always seems to come back to time — cuttings can take 1 year or longer to root, most of that time they just sit or they may even put on a short flush of growth and then root!

Now I just stick the cutting into a propagation flat in the fall, put the flat in a corner of a heavily shaded greenhouse where they will get some irrigation water, and then forget about them until the following fall or spring!

Cuttings are dipped in a 0.8% IBA rooting powder. The use of bottom heat does not seem to speed up the rooting process; in fact, it can lead to more trouble with stem rot. About 80% of the cuttings will eventually root using this method. I haven’t yet found a way of rooting the cuttings in less time. **Key requirement: Patience!**

In summary, *T. aralioides* is easy to propagate from seed providing you have access to fresh seed and can sow it before it dries. Cutting propagation is also easy providing that patience is one of your virtues!