

# How To Start Willow Cuttings

## Bluestem Nursery - [www.bluestem.ca](http://www.bluestem.ca)

We want to emphasize that willows root very easily!

When you receive the cuttings:

The cuttings should be dealt with immediately. Your choices include:

- put into the fridge in a loose plastic bag until ready to plant
  - this is only appropriate if the cuttings experienced cool temperatures during transit.
  - if the weather is hot they will be breaking dormancy and will not do well if put back into cool temperatures. Plant these cuttings immediately.
- plant in pots, for future planting into the landscape
- plant directly into the ground
- for cuttings obtained late in the season, soak in water for 24 hours before planting

To start cuttings in pots:

For best results, start the willow cuttings in one gallon size pots until well rooted. The soil mix should contain 50% sharp sand (builders sand). Rich soil mixes are not necessary and sometimes cause the cuttings to rot. Good drainage is essential. When growth starts, a *light* application of organic fertilizer is recommended.

**IMPORTANT:** To plant simply push the pointed end into the soil (buds pointing upwards), leaving two or three buds visible. Water. **The soil must not be allowed to dry out.**

The cutting will initiate roots all along its length, wherever it is in contact with the soil. Keep the pots evenly moist, in light shade and out of the wind until established. The soil must not be allowed to dry out.

The plants are ready to plant in the ground when the roots hold the potting soil in place. Turn the potted plant upside down and carefully separate the pot. If the soil/root ball is firm with no chunks of soil wanting to fall off, it is ready to plant. Before planting, soak the plant (in the pot) in a bucket of water. Hold it under the surface of the water until air bubbles stop rising to the surface. Now all the soil is soaking wet.

Dig your hole, put the plant in the ground, firm the soil around it and water thoroughly. **It must not be allowed to dry out**, particularly the first year.

To start cuttings directly in the ground:

Prepare the planting area:

- the soil should be soft for ease of pushing the cutting down into it
- weeds need to be kept away from the cutting for the entire first season.

Timing of planting:

- the ground must not be frozen nor should it be very cold (the cuttings may rot)
- plant when it "feels like spring is in the air"

**IMPORTANT:** To plant simply push the pointed end into the soil (buds pointing upwards), leaving two or three buds visible. Firm the soil around the cutting. Water. The cutting will initiate roots all along its length, wherever it is in contact with the soil. **The soil must be kept moist.**

If your plant(s) die, please let us know after a month and not the next year. We are not responsible for their hardiness.