SUMMARY – Ficus Propagation and Braiding
Carl Dion Laplante, McGill University
PLNT 351 – Special Topics in Plant Science

Objectives

- Demonstrate all the steps involved in propagating Ficus benjamina and Schefflera arboricola from stem cuttings.
- Demonstrate one technique of stem braiding for Ficus benjamina.

Plants used

Ficus benjamina

The Ficus tree and is probably the most common indoors plant found in North America. It originates from south Asia and northern Australia, but now adorns the interior landscapes of malls, offices, and houses alike. Being very easy to propagate, the ficus is usually cheap, which contributes to its popularity. When young, the stems of Ficus are quite flexible and can be braided in various ways, which is an interesting way for sellers to easily add value to the product. Indoors, the plant is not known to need particular attention in terms of watering, lighting, fertilizing, or pruning, although a constant environment with minimal variation in temperature, humidity and light is preferable.

Resources: http://davesgarden.com/guides/articles/view/2470/

Schefflera arboricola

The umbrella tree is an evergreen shrub from Taiwan that is commonly used as a houseplant. It is easily recognized by its attractive palmately compound dark green leaves. The plant is not hard to care for indoors, but it prefers a well-drained potting mix and bright light. It is commonly used for bonsai trees.

Resources: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Schefflera_arboricola
http://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/PlantFinder/PlantFinderDetails.aspx?kempercode=b636

Techniques used

Semi-hardwood cutting

Semi-hardwood cuttings are stem cuttings of non-dormant wood with developed bark. The cuttings should be devoid of flower buds, disease or pest. It is better to use the cuttings as soon as possible after collection; otherwise, keep moist and cool until use. The rooting medium should be sterile and well-
drained, as air is needed for the growing tissues that will form the roots. Sufficient air humidity or mist should be provided to avoid desiccation stress, and frequent watering of the medium can also improve rooting. For Ficus, no rooting hormone powder is necessary for good rooting results. Finally, bottom heat accelerates metabolism at the sites of root formation and should improve rooting.


**Stem braiding**

The stem-braiding technique demonstrated in the video used only 4 stems, crossed over each other alternatively in pairs. The stems of the ficus tree are flexible enough to allow many other braiding patterns, though, involving from 2 to 8 stems (see below).

**Author bio**

Carl Dion Laplante is a U3 Agro-Environmental Science student at McGill University, specialized in Professional Agrology and Ecological Agriculture. His interests revolve mainly around horticulture, greenhouse production, agroecology and sustainable agriculture.

**Acknowledgements**

The author is thankful to Raina Fan for her support and training in video-making, as well as to Danielle Donnelly for her supervision and camera work in this project.