

## Ever Tried Oasis Blocks in Propagation? Believe it or Not They Work!®

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As propagators, we are faced with many challenges in today's production techniques. The main one, for us, is allowable space.

Many nurseries use the direct stick method into 2¼ inch to 6-inch pots, which cuts down on potting labor. The most common occurring problem with this method is the percentage of plants that do not root. This can lead to lost dollars not only in wasted space, but also in labor, heat, pots, and soil. We constantly look for alternatives and positive results in the stages of rooting cuttings, and the time and space it takes to get them to a finished product.

In the last 3 years we have tried many forms of oasis blocks to obtain good rooting percentages. We feel that the oasis wedge system, with 102 units per tray, is the most successful. These sit very well in a 1020 flat. The procedures for using these wedges are very simple. The wedge flats are presoaked to base saturation and stored in a cool environment to keep them from drying out. Our cuttings go through the standard preparations and are then directly stuck into the preformed star-shaped holes. Care must be taken to insert the cuttings straight or they will curve to the outside wall of the wedge and rest against the plastic cell. Each flat is then thoroughly watered and placed into the heated propagation houses. The cuttings are then monitored for callusing and rooting.

Most softwood cuttings will completely root out in a period of 7 to 20 days, depending on species. Once at this stage the cuttings can be plugged into a finished 3-inch to 12-inch container. The shelf life from this method of rooting we have noticed is greatly extended do to the air pruning that occurs in the wedge cells. We have held onto flats as long as 6 months with no problems of overgrown or girdling roots.

Our oasis wedge system sounds perfect, but also can be disastrous. The greatest attention should be given to moisture control. Once the oasis dries completely root damage will occur. The same consideration must be given for over watering. The wedges can become waterlogged and this will lead to plant deterioration.

The oasis wedge system is working for us and we plan to pursue further research.