



Gardening News for Hopeman BALL Group

Introduction

When I was a student, we talked about how we could acquire plants and large numbers of them cheaply. I was introduced to pockling, not even sure it is a word, and taking cuttings. Pockling is when you take a small piece of a plant, just enough for a cutting, from someone else's garden. If you carry a little plastic bag in your pocket, the cutting will live until you get home and plant it. It is important not to harm the mother plant. We were told this isn't stealing because we are only taking a small cutting but I realize you might have a different opinion on this.

Once you have successfully grown your cutting on to a plant, you can take more cuttings from the plant and grow on more. I recently bought one very healthy geranium plant and intend to use the whole thing for cuttings.



Poor plant looks pretty bedraggled now but I do have 4 good cuttings, see top row of second picture. Remove large leaves, bottom row, and make sure that you still have some buds on the stem that will grow.

A number of years ago, I was visiting the Balmoral Estate with a cousin and we came across a beautiful geranium growing up a wall. Unbeknown to me, my cousin, who loved to grow plants from cuttings, pockled a very small piece of this plant. When we arrived back at my house, he asked if he could use my greenhouse, potted the cutting and took it home with him.

This one plant has now been the source of many plants. I have at least 6 and have given many away. We call it the Balmoral Geranium and sometimes it will survive the winter outside but not always. Do you know why? With such a mild winter, my outside one had survived



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but I also kept some in the greenhouse and one in the house just in case. From 4 cuttings taken in late February, you can see that two have survived.



These are both Balmoral Geraniums. It is better to put your cuttings together around the side of the pot. If you have only one cutting, put it in a very small pot to start it off. Sometimes a plastic bag over the pot will prevent drying out but be careful since this can also cause mould growth. Geraniums cuttings are usually easy to grow and take only a few weeks to root. I don't use rooting powder but you can if you wish.

Last week my daughter brought me some seed potatoes, earlies and main crop.



The seed potatoes are perfect for planting. Make sure that these shoots are kept upright and try not to break them off. Your old potatoes that have grown shoots will work but perhaps not so well. I have one that sprouts in my raised bed every year and it produces more potatoes than any I have planted so you never know. Just try.



I have planted some earlies in bags but remember, not too many. 3 is probably a maximum and may be too much. My bags are old recycling bags I had before we got bins. Remember to make some holes in the bottom for drainage. Cover them with compost, about a few inches and gently firm it down. Leave to grow until you see the green shoots and cover with compost again. Continue to do this and you will eventually fill the bag.

My greenhouse is now full of seedlings. The pricked out bunches of Californian poppies are growing well, I have 40 germinated giant sunflowers, 40 pricked out beetroot plants and three lots of mixed lettuce planted in trays at different times which I will leave in the trays and cut the leaves once they are big enough. I have planted broad beans, mange tout and purple sprouting broccoli and since I have a very small garden there will be plants to spare.

Did anyone get a free boxed seed from M&S and have you planted it? Let me know what happens.

Next time: Feedback from the gardeners of you out there and pruning roses.