

Care of Stock Plants and Cutting Production of Kalanchoe

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MAINTENANCE OF STOCK PLANTS

The practical life of a kalanchoe stock plant is usually 1 year. To obtain suitable cutting material, the stock plant is potted on three times in the course of a year. As it grows taller the stock plant becomes unstable and falls over easily so it needs frequent thinning. The maintenance of the stock plant is very important, but is labour-intensive.

I learned about the container culture of kalanchoe stock plants in Denmark, and applied a modified version of this technique to my present cultivation system. A styrol box (70 cm × 43 cm × 14 cm) equipped with four watering wicks at the bottom was used for the cultivation of the stock plants. Eight to ten stock plants were planted in this box with a kalanchoe compost [unconditioned peat, conditioned peat, perlite, manure (6 : 7 : 4 : 3, by volume) pH 5.5-6.0, EC 1.2 mmho]. On average, five to six cuttings were harvested from each stock plant per month. In winter, the number of harvestable cuttings decreased. In general, the average number of harvestable cuttings is two to three 1 month after planting, and ten to twelve 12 months later. In the container, the stock plants grow vigorously, and remain stable. At first, disease epidemics were feared. However, the occurrence of disease was similar in both the normal pot culture and container culture. The container is recycled after sterilization with a fungicide (Sunfume). The container culture of stock plants produced good results with the following features:

- Healthy growth
- Freedom from soil-borne diseases
- Good growth of cuttings
- Increased labour savings
- Stability of container system

In the future, I plan to examine rockwool culture, hydroball culture, etc. I must improve the fixing technique of the stock plants in rockwool culture, and the recycling method in hydroball culture.

For success in propagation, the cutting should be 5 to 6 cm in length, with 2 to 3 leaves attached; young, soft growth is recommended. Suberized shoots are not good for cutting propagation. Young cuttings produce many branches and grow uniformly. During winter cover the cutting bed with vinyl sheeting and during summer mist to keep cuttings turgid. Rooting begins in 7 days during summer, and 10 to 12 days during winter.

As mentioned above, the container culture of the stock plants of kalanchoe achieved a constant harvest of young soft shoots.