

What is a Bamboo Cutting ?



*Mrs Myasu Garanja's bamboo,
which she planted from a cutting*

Bamboo is an extremely useful plant which has been used for hundreds of years in society. When its shoot is young, it can be eaten as a vegetable. When the stem is strong, it can be used to build houses. That's why there's a Nepali saying that goes "when young, a vegetable; when mature, a house". In the villages, they also say that bamboo can be used for anything, except as a plough share. The traditional way of propagating bamboo is by digging up the root and transplanting a section to a new place. But this involves a lot of difficult work, takes much time, and many other plants can be damaged as it is transplanted.

So in this chapter, we show an easy and quick way of propagating many more bamboo than was previously possible.

Why make a bamboo cutting ?

Planting a bamboo from cuttings gives more benefits from less work. In less time, many more cuttings can be planted, saving work for farmers.

The traditional way of digging up bamboo with its roots causes damage to other plants, and much soil needs to be moved. So by using cuttings, this damage is also prevented.

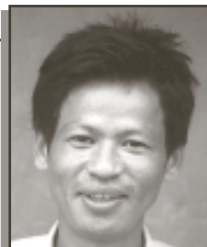
Benefits of Bamboo cuttings

- It's a quick and easy method
- With less work, many cuttings can be planted
- One bamboo branch can make many cuttings
- The original clump isn't damaged by making cuttings



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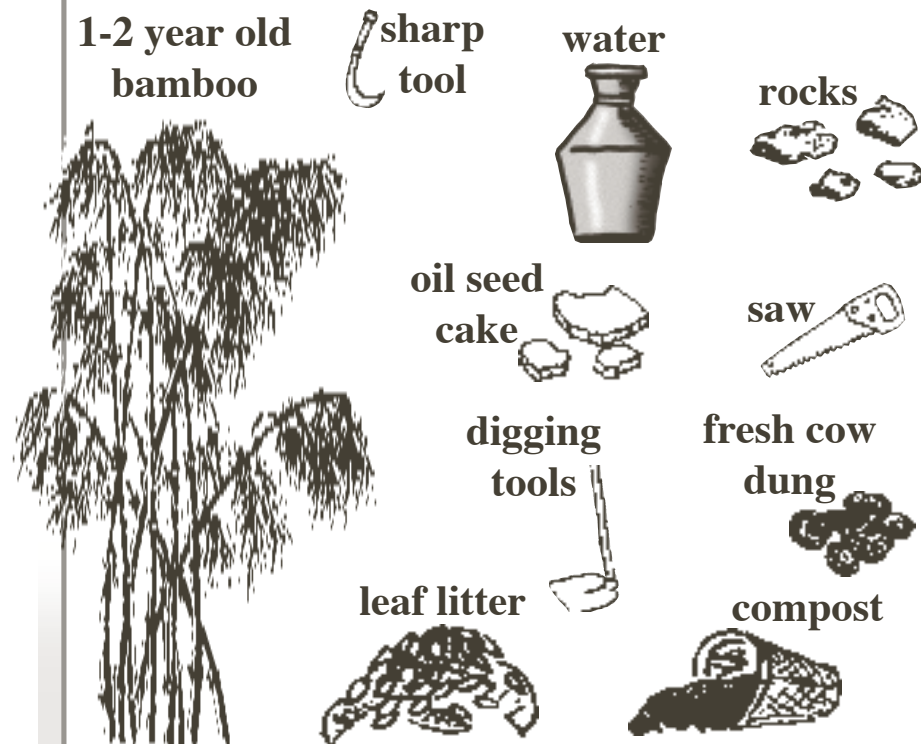


How to make a bamboo cutting ?

Which bamboo can be used to make cuttings ?

There are many types of bamboo, from hot, tropical, low lying areas to cold, high altitude areas. Most types can be used, except cane bamboo, and bamboo which has only a very small hole, or no hole in the middle.

Materials Needed to make bamboo cuttings



Things to consider when selecting the cutting

- the bamboo should be between 1-2 years old
- the bamboo should be healthy and free of disease

Time to plant

In hotter, lowland areas, cuttings are taken from mid-winter (mid January in N.Hemisphere) for up to 1 month. In hilly, cooler areas, the time starts up to one month later, until late spring (April).



Length of time to sprouting

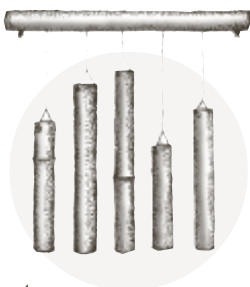
A successful cutting will sprout within 3 months.

Method of cutting

Considering the above points, the first stage is to select the bamboo for cutting.

Things to consider when cutting the bamboo

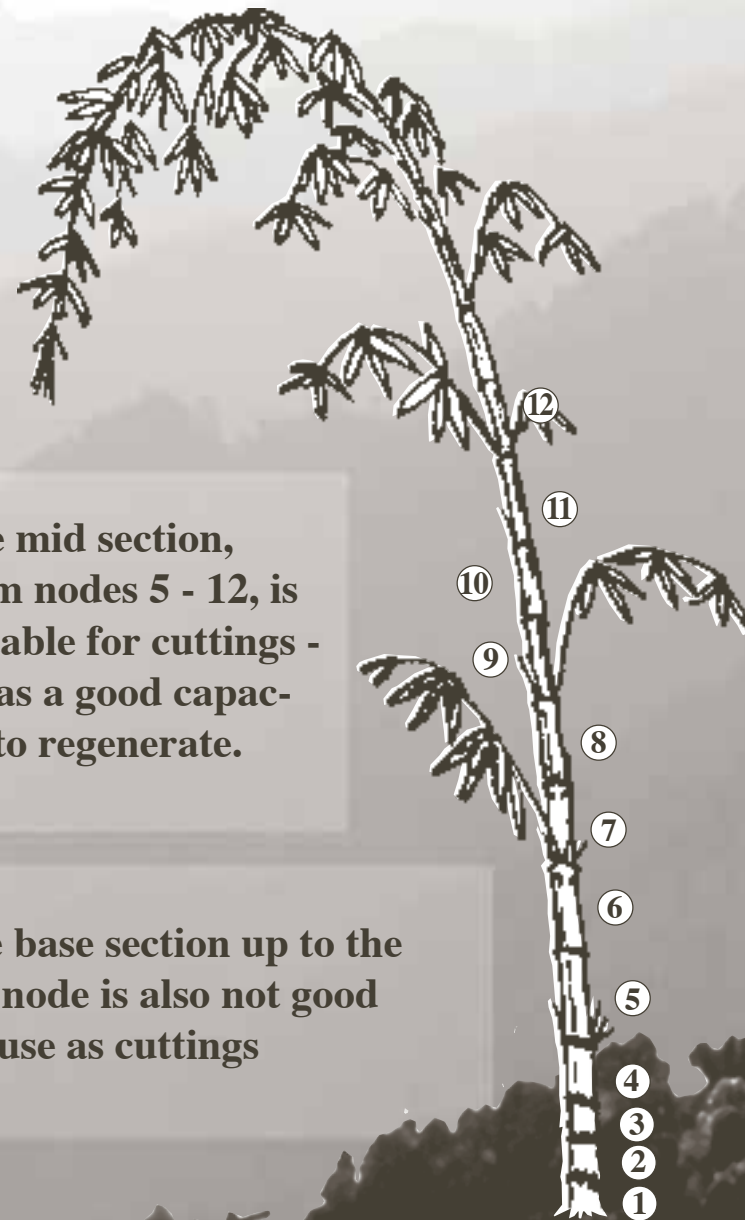
- Be careful not to damage the chosen bamboo as you fell it
- Also be careful not to damage nearby bamboo stems
- Use sharp tools (axes, machete, hook, etc.)
- As soon as the branch is felled, immediately cut off the tip from 1 inch diameter, otherwise this drains its capacity to regenerate
- Use the base and tip for something else



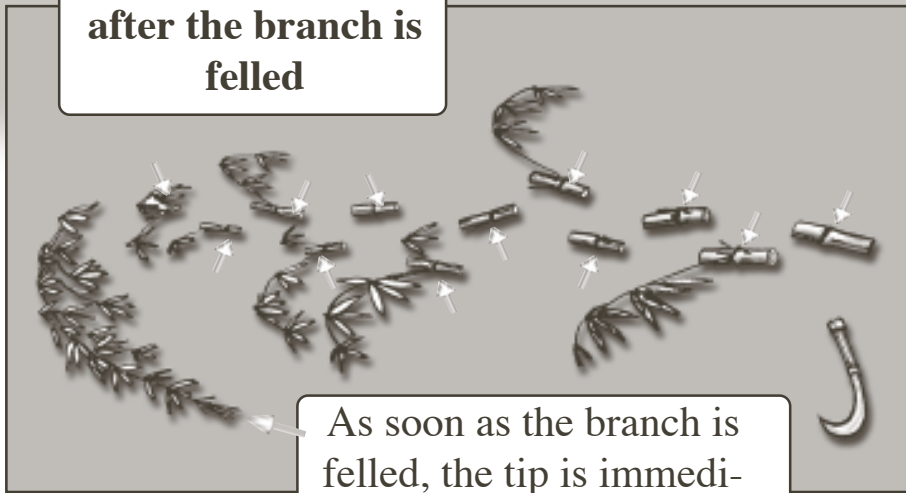
The tip is young and soft, so is not able to regenerate from cuttings

The mid section, from nodes 5 - 12, is suitable for cuttings - it has a good capacity to regenerate.

The base section up to the 4th node is also not good for use as cuttings



Selecting cuttings after the branch is felled

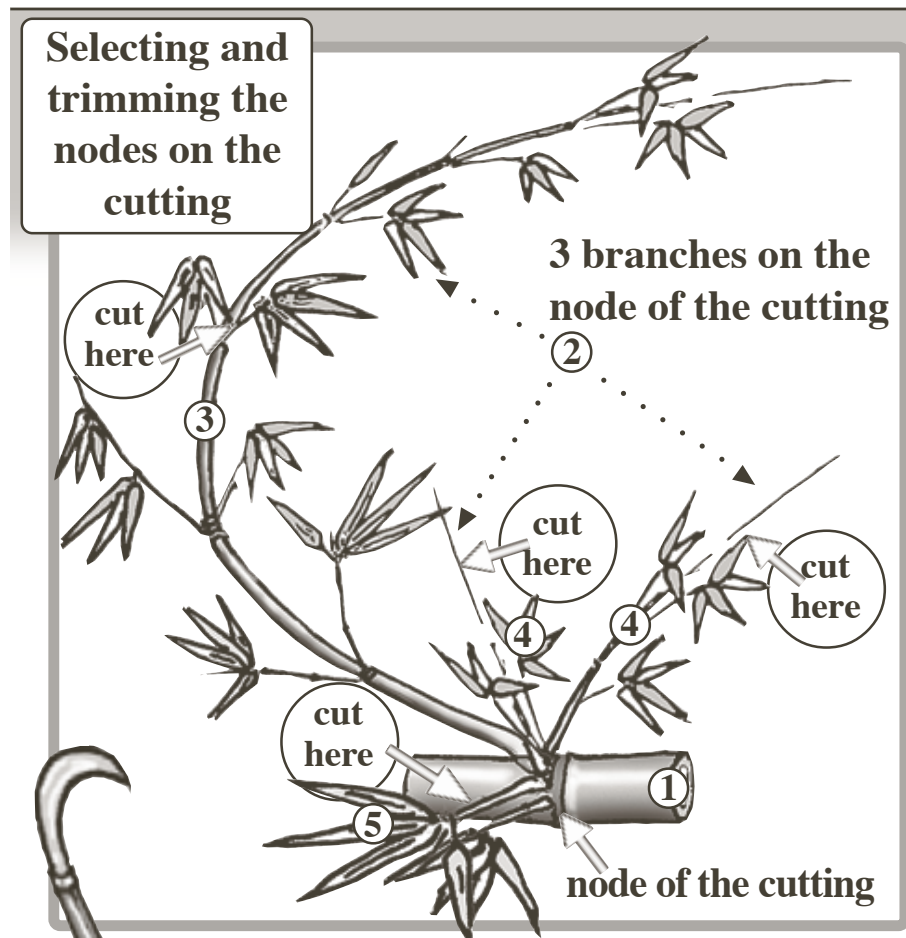


As soon as the branch is felled, the tip is immediately cut off

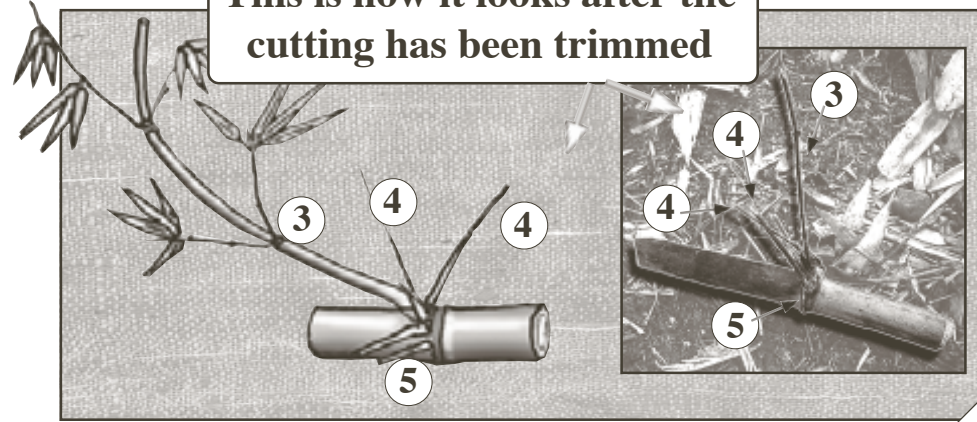
Select and cut the cuttings as described below. The numbers below match with the numbers on the diagram on page 7.

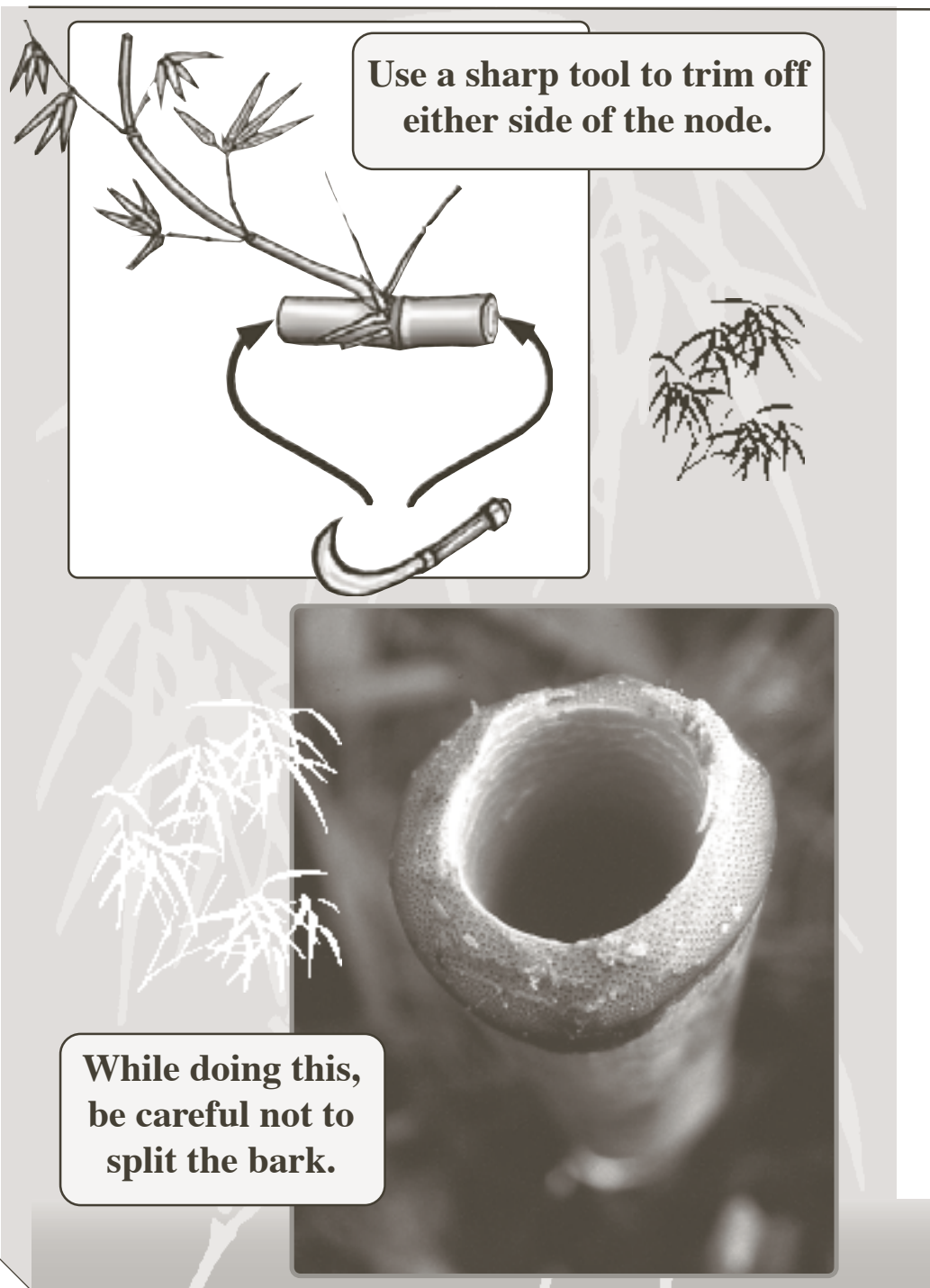
- ① There should be no damage or disease on the cuttings.
- ② Only leave 3 branches on each node of the cutting.
- ③ The mid branch of these 3 should be about 18 inches long and have 3-5 nodes (if the distance between nodes is long, there may be 3 nodes, if the distance is short, there may be 5 nodes).
- ④ The other 2 side branches of the node are cut shorter, to have 2-3 nodes in total.
- ⑤ Other, smaller branches are cut off.

Selecting and trimming the nodes on the cutting



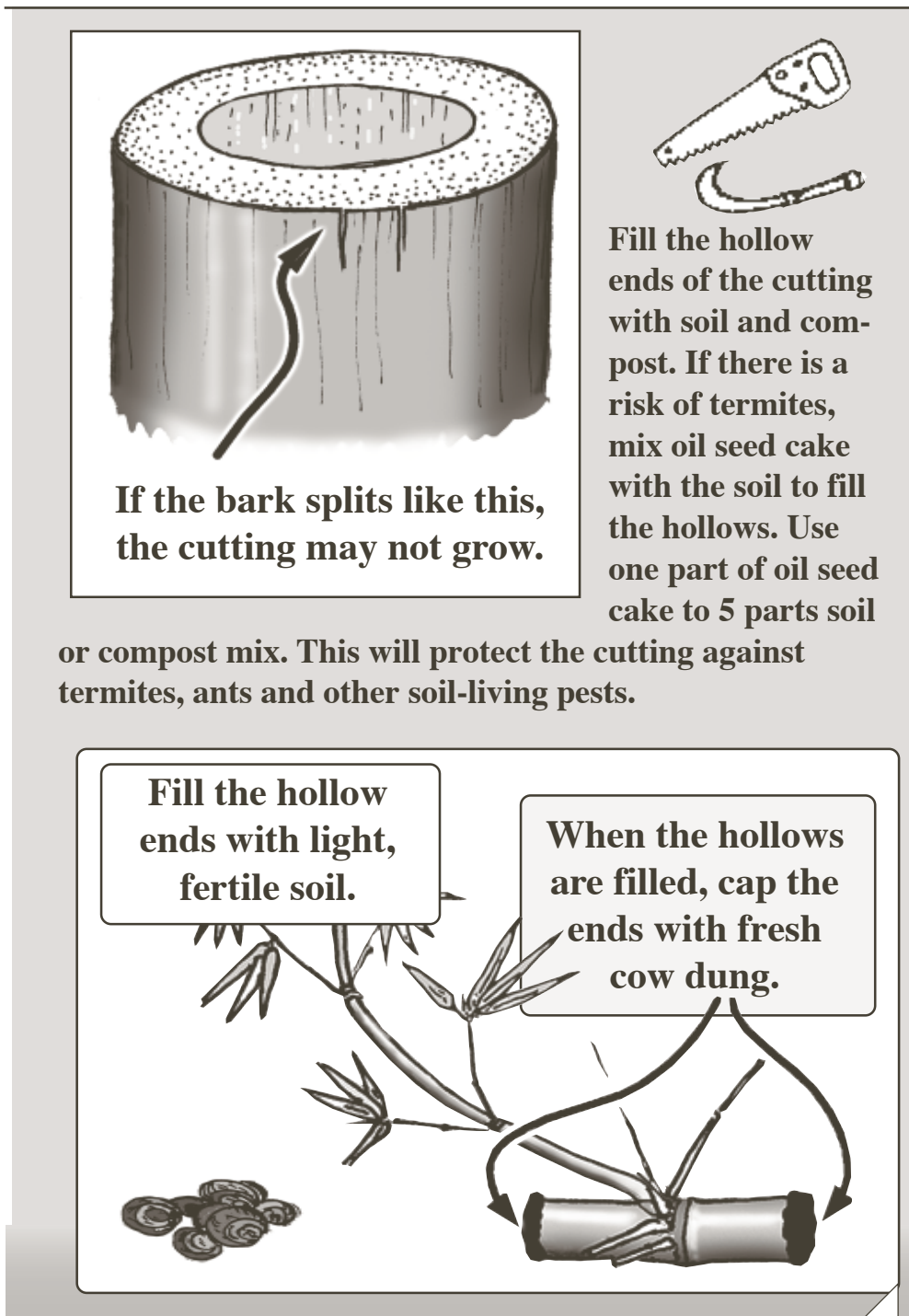
This is how it looks after the cutting has been trimmed



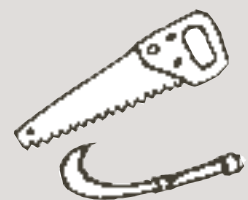


Use a sharp tool to trim off either side of the node.

While doing this, be careful not to split the bark.



If the bark splits like this, the cutting may not grow.

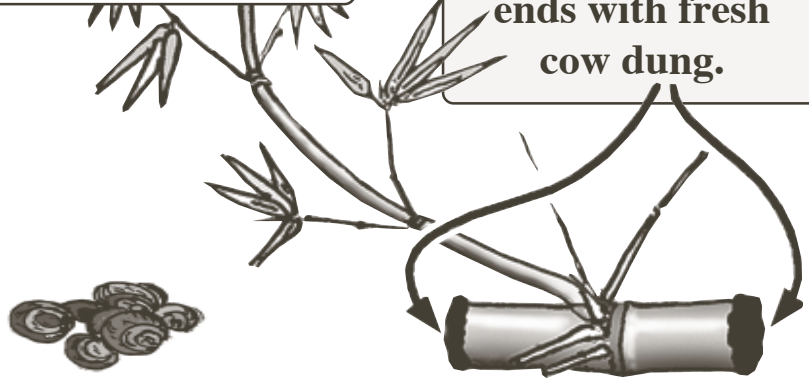


Fill the hollow ends of the cutting with soil and compost. If there is a risk of termites, mix oil seed cake with the soil to fill the hollows. Use one part of oil seed cake to 5 parts soil

or compost mix. This will protect the cutting against termites, ants and other soil-living pests.

Fill the hollow ends with light, fertile soil.

When the hollows are filled, cap the ends with fresh cow dung.



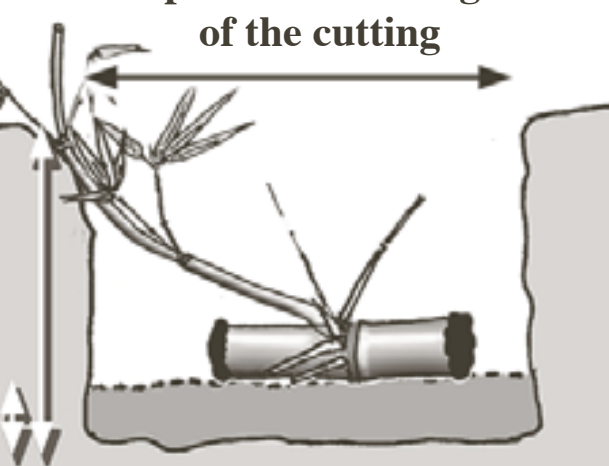
Where to plant the cutting ?

- The cutting can be planted direct in the corners and edges of fields.
- It can also be planted in the fence, river banks, in gulleys and areas of soil erosion.
- The cuttings can also be temporarily planted in a nursery, and transplanted out when roots have developed.

Planting the cuttings in a pit

The length of the pit depends on the length of the cutting

To bury the cutting, dig a pit 18 inches (50cm) deep and 18 inches wide.

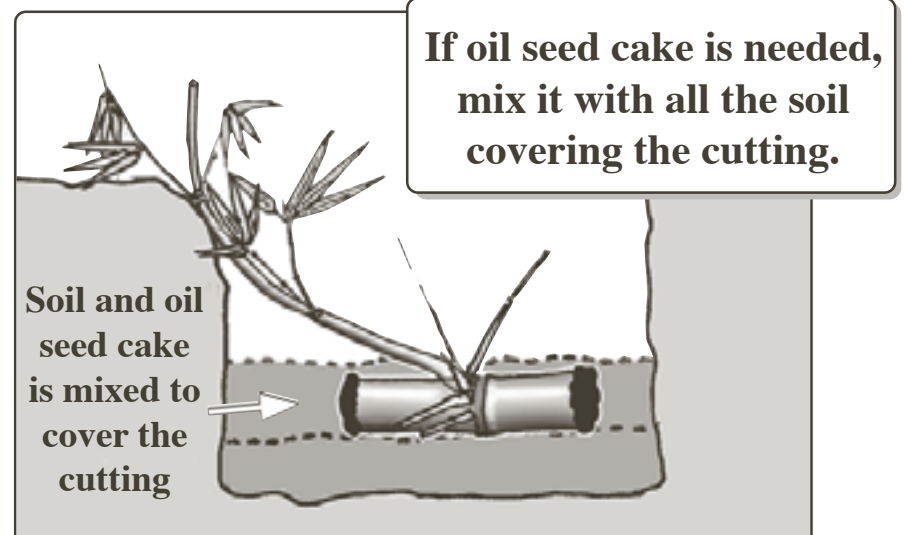


Before planting the cutting, put 3-4 inches of fertile soil in the bottom.

If there's a risk of termites, mix oil seed cake with the fertile soil in the bottom of the pit



Place the cutting in the pit.

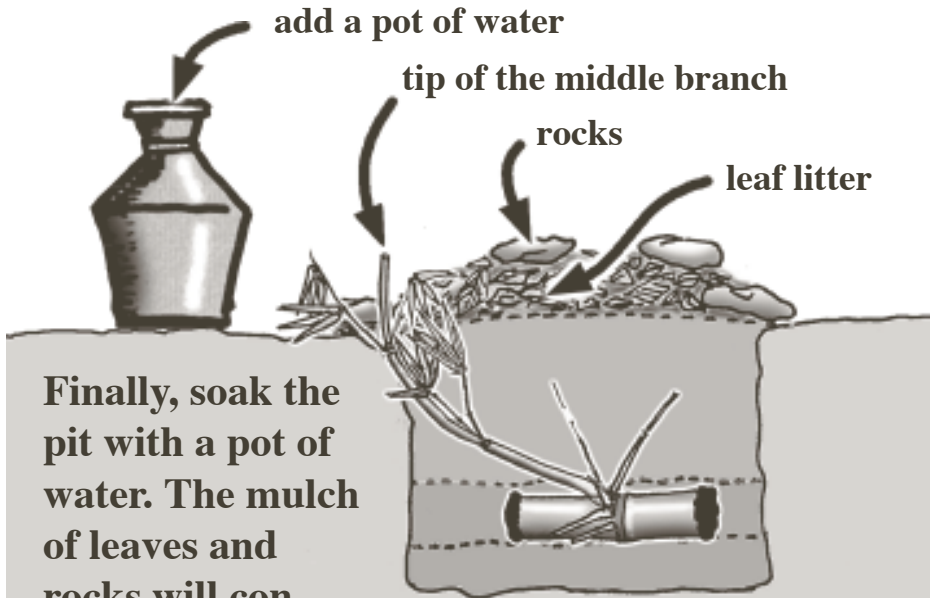


If oil seed cake is needed, mix it with all the soil covering the cutting.

Soil and oil seed cake is mixed to cover the cutting

Then fill in the pit with soil. Leave the middle branch of the node sticking out of the pit a few inches.

Then mulch the pit with leaf litter and cover with small rocks.



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Finally, soak the pit with a pot of water. The mulch of leaves and rocks will conserve moisture. Even so, it's best to water the cutting 2-3 times a week in the dry season, if possible.

If there were no bamboo neither would there be flute

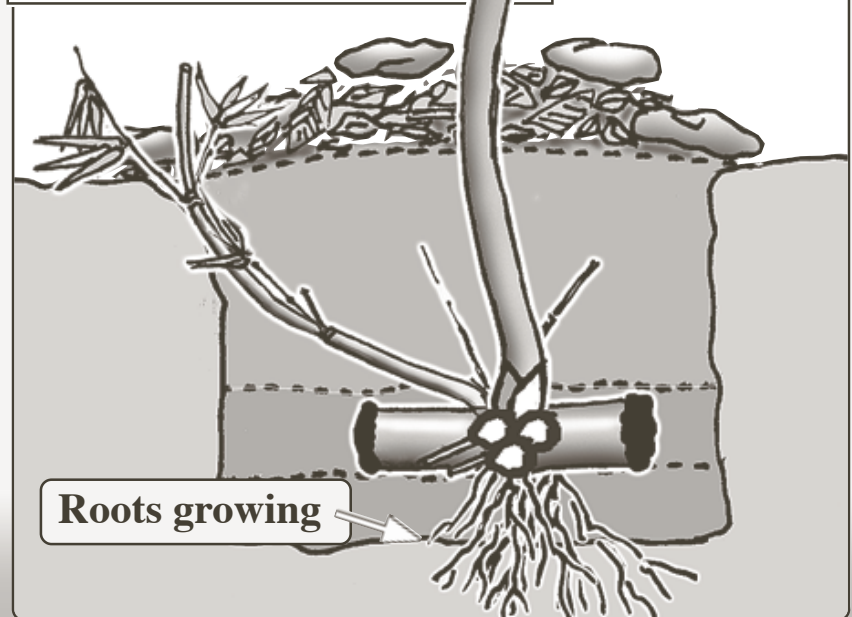


And without nature, there'd be no culture

A newly sprouted cutting



The cutting will sprout 3-4 weeks after planting,



Roots growing

Maintenance

How to maintain a bamboo cutting

- The cutting should be protected from livestock. People also shouldn't step where the cutting is planted.
- Water the cutting 2-3 times a week if possible.
- The bamboo grown from cuttings can be harvested for use after it is 3 years old.

Uses of bamboo

- Important household items like baskets, winnowing trays, etc. are made from bamboo
- Craft industries using bamboo provide many people with employment
- Local bamboo can replace timber and plastics bought in from the outside, which helps to make the community more self reliant
- This also saves money
- It's using a local resource
- Bamboo helps in erosion control and soil conservation
- Once planted, bamboo lasts many years
- From the cradle to the grave, bamboo is an essential part of daily life



bamboo utensils



a plane made from bamboo

Farmers' Experience

Mrs Mayasu Garanja

From Nepal, Surkhet district, Dahachaur - 3, and a member of "Evergreen" women's group, Mrs Mayasu Garanja has planted many bamboo cuttings. Now let's read about her experiences.



Mrs Mayasu Garanja

“ I leaned how to make bamboo cuttings from the Homestead Programme (JPP). At first it was difficult without knowing, but after training I found it easy to grow bamboo from cuttings. First you need a branch which is 1-2 years old. This is cut into sections, each with a node in the middle and hollow on either side. You fill the hollow ends with fertile soil, and cap the ends with cow dung. Plant this cutting in a pit, mulch well and add water. I've found the best time to do this is mid-January to mid-March. It's so useful to plant bamboo like this. You can make so many things from bamboo - baskets, trays, etc., all useful in the house. If you have bamboo in your fields it saves having to buy lots of things from outside. Now, with this method we can plant lots of cuttings and so grow lots of bamboo, because it's such an easy method.





Read On !



Subjects Related to Bamboo Cuttings

This book provides enough information for you to be able to make your own bamboo cuttings. However, this information is also linked to other methods. For extra benefits let's read, learn and practice from other related chapters.



**Soil Conservation
and Improvement
chapter**



**Bamboo Cuttings
chapter**



**Living Fence
chapter**



Bamboo is very useful for soil conservation. In this chapter, we describe the nature of soil, how to protect existing soil, and show how to regenerate damaged soil making it into into productive land again.



Planting bamboo, as well as other useful trees and shrubs, helps to protect the land as well as providing many other important benefits. Information about planting and maintaining a living fence is given in this chapter.