

## Devil's Backbone / Jacob's Ladder Red Bird Cactus / Slipper plant (*Pedilanthus tithymaloides*)

Named Devil's Backbone or Jacob's Ladder due to the zig-zag nature of the stem and called Red Bird Cactus or Slipper plant due to the red flowers that form in the spring, these plants are EXCELLENT if you don't have a green thumb.

They make GREAT specimens for your rock garden or in any moderately dry, sunny spot. These plants are cold hardy to zone 9a, can be planted in full sun to bright shade and are PERFECT for xeriscaping; very drought tolerant. In colder climates, they can be planted in containers and brought in during the winter or kept in a bright window in your home or office all year long. These plants can stand quite dry conditions, but will thrive with a moderate amount of water in well draining soil - don't overwater!

These plants are SUPER EASY to root; simply place each cutting, cut end down, into some well draining (cactus suitable) soil. I usually bury mine about 3" deep in the soil; leaving the remainder of the stem above ground level. Be sure to pack the soil tightly around the cutting to remove any air pockets and make sure the whole bottom of the cutting has good contact with the soil.

Water sparingly but regularly (I water every 2-3 days when getting them started; don't allow water to stand), water as you would a cactus and within a few weeks you'll have rooted, growing plants!

This is the most inexpensive way to get a start of these wonderful plants, and the way my grandmother has passed this plant on to friends and neighbors for over 30 years!

I suggest you keep your plants in a shady (or filtered sun) spot in your yard or home until you see new growth, then you can move to full sun if desired. Once started, reduce watering to about once a week. Bring your plants inside (or protect them outside) when temperatures start to fall into the 30's or a frost is expected.