



Reed Propagation

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Acknowledgements

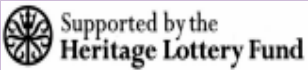
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With thanks to Brian Uttley, who provided all the technical information reproduced in this note.

Additional information, either text or images, which will enhance the usefulness of this technical note would be appreciated. Please email *Flora locale* using the above address.

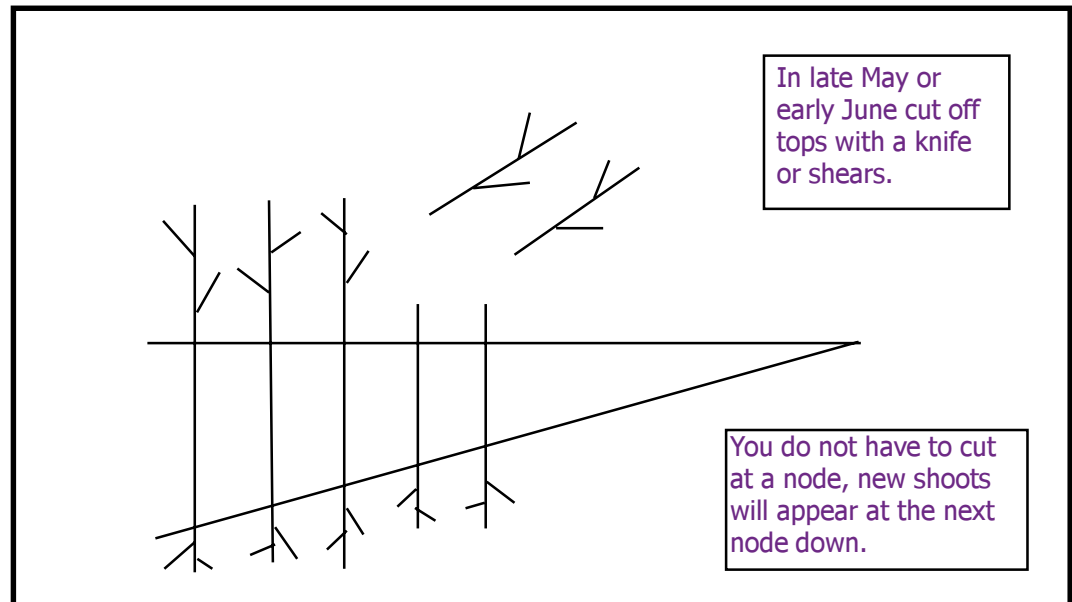
Compiled by Cath White, *Flora locale*

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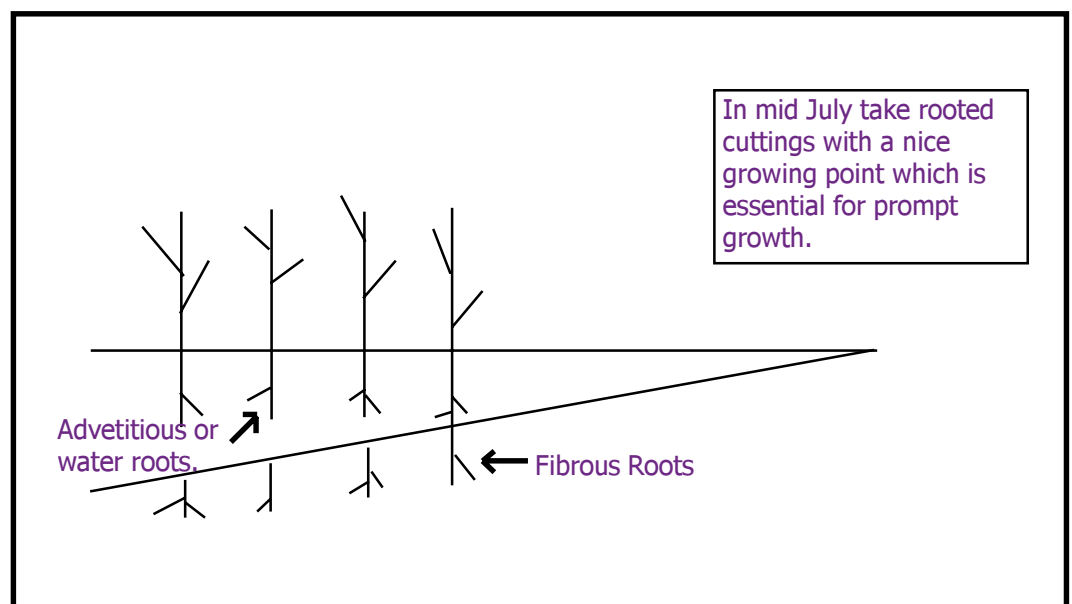
Preparation of transplants

From an existing reed bed in shallow water, trim the reed stems 2-3 nodes above water levels in June. If cuttings are taken with a longer stem they usually break, the leaves fall off, leaving just a stick which quickly dies. Cutting stems down in June provides a short strong stem, easy to transport and plant. This also ensures that leading shoots have been produced which helps cutting and will get away well when transplanted in nursery beds.

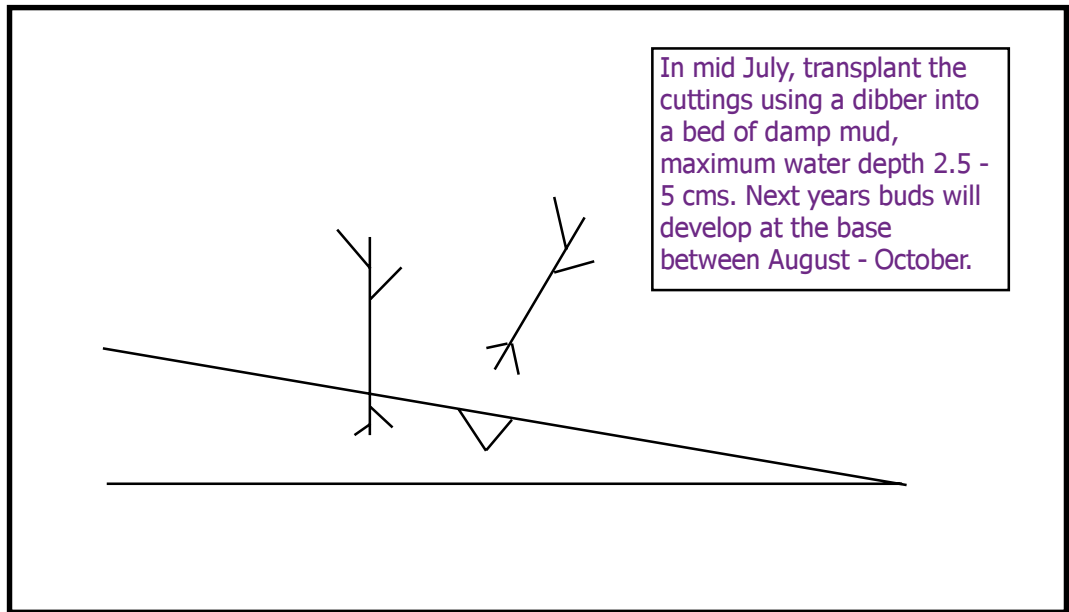


After 4-5 weeks they will have provided terminal shoots 10 - 20 cms long. By mid July the reed stems should have produced adventitious roots above the soil level. Air and water temperatures are much warmer in July than April which is better for growth.

Water levels will by now be dropping and the new cuttings can now be easily taken, using either a Turk saw or tree pruner with serrated teeth. Either cut the stem off 5 - 7.5 cms into the mud (this is the best) or cut the stem off below the adventitious or water roots. Using a dibber, the cuttings can either be put in around lake or other water margins in light vegetation (this will hide them from geese). Alternatively make a nursery bed of moist soil in very shallow water 20 cms apart, and transfer to the permanent site the following summer.



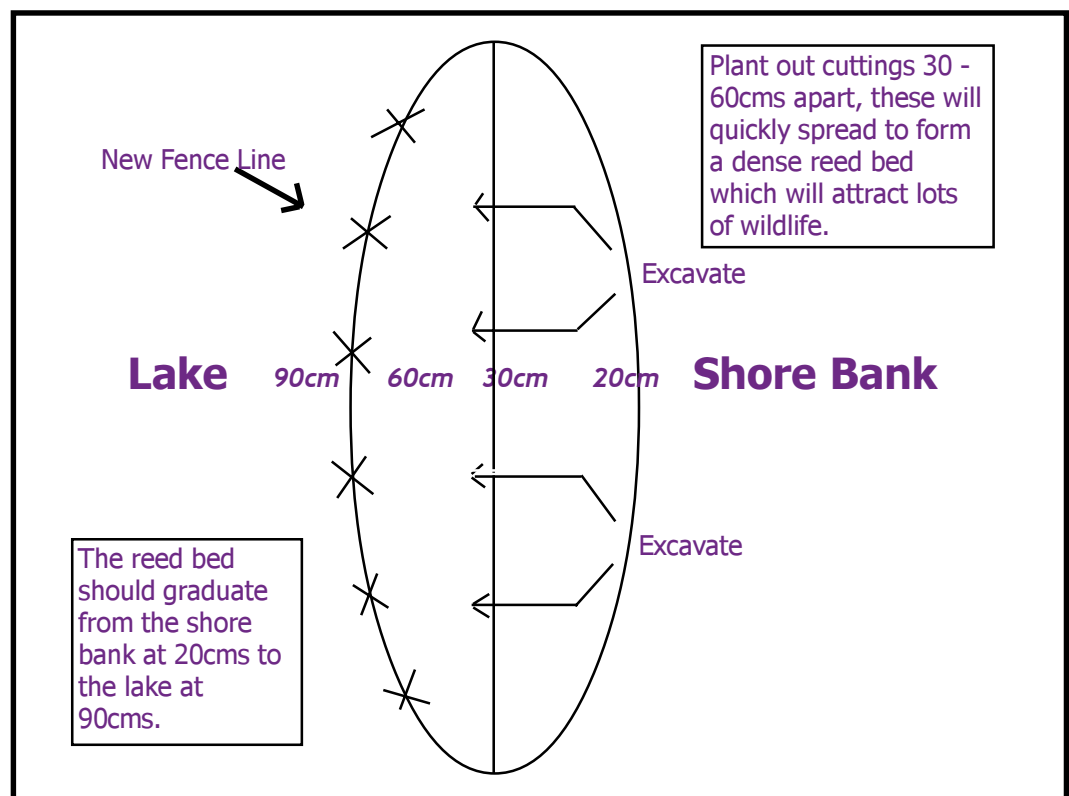
Plant cuttings in water of about 2.5 - 5 cms, if the water is deeper cutting can be difficult and results variable. Wet mud is best and is easily kept wet by sloshing water over the area by bucket.



Over eight years of reed propagation Brian Uttley has found this method of propagating and transplanting reeds to be the best method and also the easiest, the only tools required being a knife or shears, dibber to plant, plus a fork or spade to prepare the nursery beds.

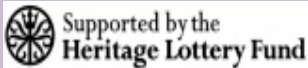
Margins suitable for reedbed establishment can also be created by scalloping lake margins with a mechanical digger during September, when the water levels are usually at their lowest.

Preparation of permanent site





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Excavate the soil to just below water level, place this spoil into the lake to double up the size of the reed bed. This creates the largest area for a reed bed with the least amount of digging. This procedure is best carried out in August or September when water levels are low.

Winter water levels should bring up the water by at least 30cms or more. On larger reed beds the levels could be graded more to provide marginal habitat for wintering Water Rail etc.

Fence the area off with pig netting in the previous year to prior to planting cuttings. Put the post and netting fence out as far as possible, this can be removed after about three years once the reed bed is mature enough, however if geese are a problem it is best to leave the fence in situ.

Further sources of information

Reedbed Management for Commercial and Wildlife Interests. C.J.Hawkes, &, P.V.Jose. (1999). RSPB. £14.95

Reedbed construction guidelines:

www.somerset.gov.uk/levels/LIFE/RGTitles.htm

www.somerset.gov.uk/levels/LIFE/RGCosts.htm

