

Harvesting Plant Cuttings

Collect, protect and prepare dormant material for soil bioengineering

How to use this sheet	Keep this sheet nearby before harvest and again at handoff to the installer. Rooting potential is strongly affected by what happens before installation: species and source fit, dormant timing, cut quality, moisture, temperature and handling.
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Choose before cutting

Match species to site	The course identifies willows, cottonwood/balsam poplar and red-osier dogwood as important cutting groups in BC. Alders are valuable pioneers but are established from seed or container stock.
Use suitable source plants	Prefer vigorous, healthy, recent shoots from local conditions similar to the restoration site.
Confirm dormancy	Harvest after leaf drop and before bud break; do not treat an active, leafing stem as dormant material.

Protect viability from the first cut

- Use sharp loppers or a saw and make clean cuts without crushing or stripping bark.
- Bundle promptly; keep cut ends moist with wet burlap or suitable wrapping.
- Transport in shade and keep bundles cool. Avoid sun on a truck bed and avoid heavy loads on fresh material.
- If installation is delayed, follow the course guidance for clean-water immersion or cold storage, then rehydrate before installation.

Inspect the bundle

- Reject or set aside diseased, insect-damaged, badly crushed or dried material.
- Separate material by species, intended technique and source location.
- Label harvest date, source area and intended site so the installer can check provenance and timing.

Common mistakes

- Harvesting after bud break.
- Assuming every native species roots from a stem cutting.
- Leaving cuttings exposed to sun, wind or heat.
- Using long storage without a documented moisture and temperature plan.

Field check before you leave the site

☐ Dormant timing confirmed	☐ Species and source conditions recorded
☐ Clean cuts and intact bark checked	☐ Bundles are shaded, cool and moist
☐ Damaged or suspect material separated	☐ Delay, storage and rehydration plan recorded

Limits and next step	The source gives practical dimensions, soaking windows and storage conditions for particular applications. Use those values only with the matching course context and a site-specific plan; local regulations, plant health requirements and project specifications still apply.
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Grounded in current course topics. Sources: [Open the course](#) | [Read the source topics](#)