Propagating Northern White Cedar from Cuttings

Introduction

The future of Northen White Cedar is uncertain with an ever-changing climate regime. The North Shore of Lake Superior has been recognized as a refuge area where northern white cedar may be able to survive high levels of climate change. Planting cedar on north facing slopes or areas that hold moisture are great locations to boost this species into the future. Landowners on the North Shore of Lake Superior have had success propagating northern white cedar from cuttings. Propagating cedar ensures the seedlings will be adapted to the soil and moisture conditions from where the cutting is taken. This tactic is great for landowners that need many seedlings for their properties. Replicating this process is relatively simple and cheap. Cuttings are a great low-cost option for those that like to do things themselves and for those that cannot find cedar saplings on the market.

Instructions

1. Gather the cuttings from young robust trees during the dormant period, from fall to early spring. Cut 1 to 3 inches below the new growth. New growth will be light green and older growth will be light brown.
2. Cut the stem at a 45-degree angle to expose more surface area. Having more surface area will allow more rooting compound to stick to the surface.
3. Prepare the soil you are going to use. A well-drained soil will make the seedling develop root systems faster than a poorly drained organic or rich soil.
4. Cuttings can be placed in pots or in soil beds. If pots are used make sure there are drainage holes on the bottom.
5. Remove the bottom 2 to 3 inches of branches on each cutting to expose the growth nodes. The more foliage that is removed the less energy is required.
6. Make holes in the soil with the end of the sapling to make sure the rooting compound doesn't come off. Dip 2 to 3 inches of the cut end on the sapling into a .1% to 1.5% butyric acid rooting compound and place the cutting in the premade hole.
7. Compress the soil around the base of the sapling so there are no air pockets.
8. Place the white cedar cuttings in a warm location but not in full sun.
9. Mist the cuttings twice daily to prevent the foliage from dehydrating. Also feel for soil moisture, and water before the soil dries out.
10. After 3 or 4 weeks of misting twice daily, move to one misting per day for another month while ensuring the soil stays moist.
11. After two months, test to see if rooting has occurred by gently pulling up on the seedlings. Transplant the seedlings once rooting has occurred. Make sure to put some sort of deer protection around each seedling. Transplant into pots or into their permanent homes.

General Tips

- Any soil type can work for this process, but well drained soils that have some sand in them will generally have faster rooting.
- Seedlings that turn yellow can be pulled as they have not rooted.
- Many cedars can be placed in one container while roots establish.
- Two-liter soda bottles can be cut in half and placed over a 4 to 6 inch pot to help hold humidity and warmth.
- Growing seedlings in indirect sunlight helps keep them at the right temperature (65 to 75 degrees). This also helps to retain moisture.

Planting Rooted Cedars

- Cedars can tolerate some shade but aim for a location where the seedling can capture at least 40 to 60 % of the sunlight per day.
- Dig a hole two times the width of your pot diameter. This will ensure that the seedling has plenty of room to grow in the first couple of years without stress.
- Water seedlings during drought conditions
- Cage the newly planted cedars with 6 foot tall welded metal fencing.