



MISSION: BEAUTIFICATION ... CONSERVATION ... EDUCATION

Planting and Growing with Challenges

March 2022

Volume: VI Number: 8

Gardening Issue: Linda Doiron, Editor

Environmental Edition: May, August, November, February - Mary Lovings, Editor

Gardening Edition: June, September, December, March – Linda Doiron, Editor

Landscape Design: July, October, January, April - Suzanne Finger, Editor

Plant Stakes for Your Garden

It's early spring, the perfect time to add garden stakes to your outdoor plants. Staking plants can be an essential part of your garden. Nothing can be more frustrating than watching your plant fall over with broken stems or heavy blooms due to a lack of support, and sometimes it's not just the weight of the plant itself, but rather weather conditions such as strong winds or rain that cause them to droop.

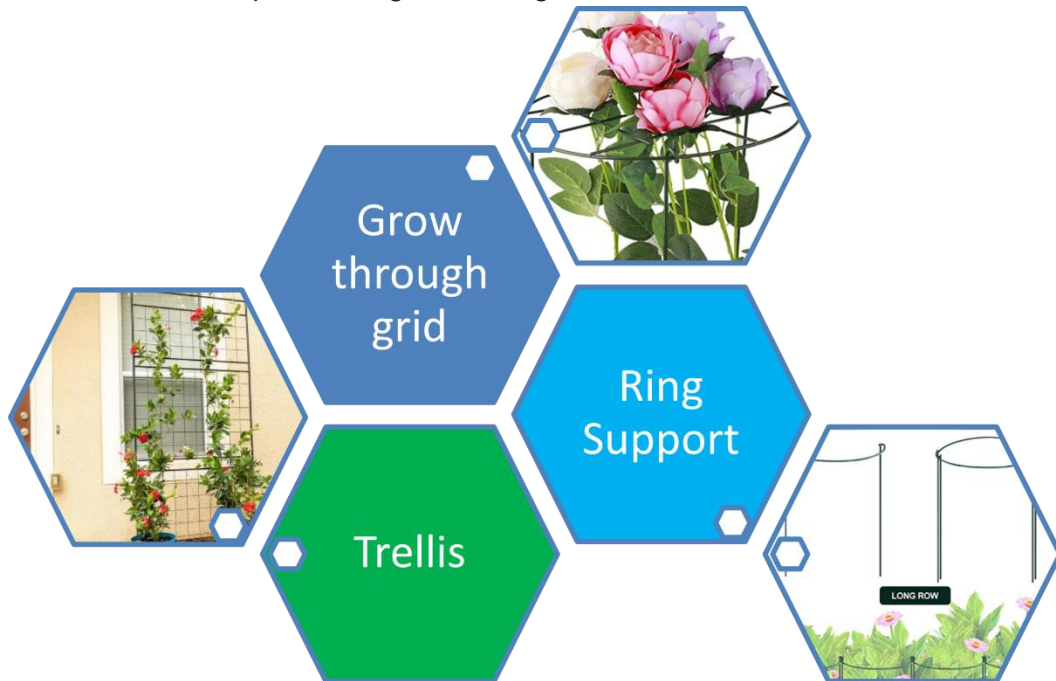
Before you get your stakes out though, here is a list of choices you can make to improve the success of your plants:

- Plant with good garden soil with plenty of organic matter as this will help the plants to grow and anchor them in the soil.
- Use proper spacing for your plants because if planted too close they may develop weak stems.
- Prune certain plants early in the season to keep them a shorter height and make them bushier and more supportive of their stems.
- Choose plants that will thrive in the conditions in your location. To quote Alexander Pope's famous advice to landscape designers: "Consult the Genius of the Place in all."

There are four types of plants that generally need to be staked:

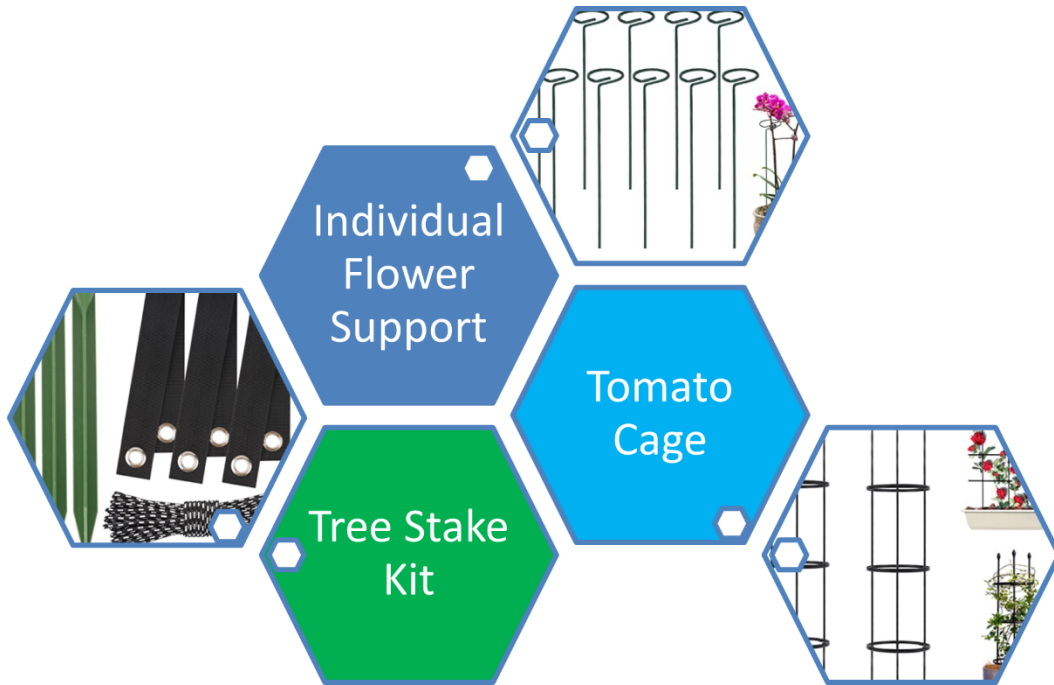
1. Flowering Perennials- Perennials such as peonies, sweet peas and zinnias all benefit from plant support. You should stake them in early spring so that they grow to their full height and potential.
2. Vegetables- Many vegetables need extra support including tomato plants to produce bountiful harvests because they can't handle their own weight. You can stake your tomatoes every growing season or surround them with a tomato cage that supports them from all sides.
3. Saplings- Young trees can benefit from stakes in their early growth stage. You can attach a sapling to a single stake, or you can set up two tall stakes on either side of the young tree connecting it using twine or flexible cords.

4. House plants- Some indoor plants such as philodendron, pothos and monstera benefit from moss or bamboo poles that guide their growth.



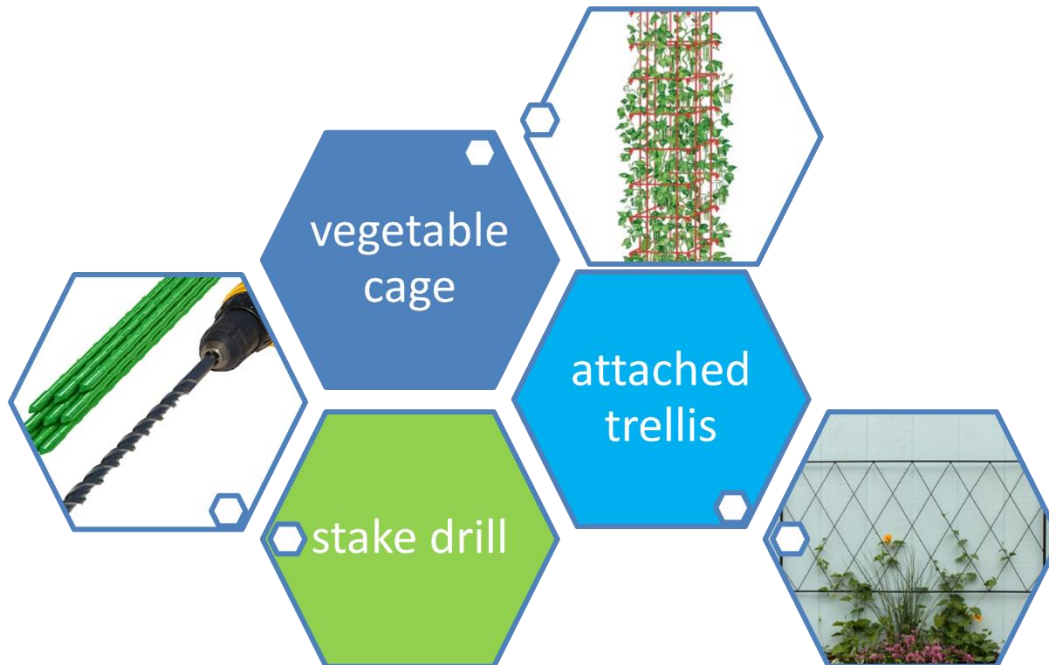
The most common methods to stake a plant:

- The single stake method is the most often used, and involves using a single stake, such as wood, bamboo, plastic, or metal, to which you can attach plants with a single plant tie. Insert a stake about six to twelve inches into the ground right next to the plant taking care to avoid any plant roots. A handy tool exists for drilling stakes into the ground. Then find a spot about 2/3 of the way up the plant and attach the plant to the stake using garden ties. Some plants require extra support, and in these cases, you can use multiple stakes.
- The ring style support method involves a metal ring to support plants like strawberries that produce multiple stems. These ring style supports are a circular wire with some having a grow through grid upheld by metal stakes. Plant shoots grow through the wire grid which supports them as they fill out with foliage and fruit. The drawback is that you can't remove them without damaging the plant.
- Tomato cages work very much like ring style supports but they're typically taller with open tops. This type of support works for many young trees, plants and vegetables providing plants 360° of support.
- Trellises are a good option if your plant expands horizontally as it grows upward as it gives your plant something to grow up against.



There are some do-it-yourself methods to plant staking that are less expensive. You can rip fencing boards and cut them into your desired length or look for an existing support near your plant to attach ties to such as a hook, a nail, or a pipe that's already on your house. You can attach your plants to a wall using self-adhesive anchors, and anchors are available that don't harm the surface. Chicken wire can also be used to support plants by placing a square of chicken wire over your plants when the first shoots start.

Regardless of the method that you use there are some tips and tricks to stake your plants as inconspicuously as possible. You can paint the stakes different shades of green to match your foliage and use green velcro ties that have the added advantage that they can be adjusted as the plant grows. Don't tie your plants too tightly because they need movement from the wind to thicken the stem. Make sure your stakes are big enough to support your plants.



Staking outdoor garden plants for support is a common activity but it's also a good idea for many indoor house plants. Indoor plants often grow very quickly and develop weak leggy stems, but rapid growth isn't the only reason for staking up indoors. Some plants are top heavy and require staking while other plants are climbers and need to be supported to grow properly.

While there is a need for most outdoor plant stakes to be inconspicuous, I think taking a more artistic approach can add some flare to your indoor plant stakes. One idea is to position the stake or support in the pot at the same time you are planting as this method prevents the root damage that can occur if you drive straight through the roots of a mature plant. Instead of placing the stake in the center of the pot, it's a good idea to position it near the edge because this will give the plant more room to grow. Make sure to drive the stake all the way to the bottom of the container to give it proper support.

Don't wait until it is too late. Although remedial staking is possible, it will not repair broken stems, and it will often be conspicuous.



Bendable Moss Pole (Etsy
Mossify)



Round Copper Trellis (Etsy
PlantaholicWireworks)



Honeycomb Trellis (Etsy
SimplySammiDesigns)

**To build, to plant, whatever you intend,
To rear the Column, or the Arch to bend,
To swell the Terras, or to sink the Grot;
In all, let Nature never be forgot.
Consult the genius of the place in all;
That tells the waters or to rise, or fall;
Or helps th' ambitious hill the heav'ns to scale,
Or scoops in circling theatres the vale;
Calls in the country, catches opening glades,
Joins willing woods, and varies shades from shades,
Now breaks, or now directs, th' intending lines;
Paints as you plant, and, as you work, designs.**

Alexander Pope

Be Well,

Linda Doiron

The Hokey Gardener

