

FICUS ELASTICA

BY

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THE *Ficus elastica*, or Rubber plant as it is commonly called, is without doubt one of the best and most enduring of decorative plants, either for the greenhouse or the more trying conditions that exist in a window or room of a dwelling house. Although its habit of growth is not as graceful as many well known house plants, such as palms, aspidistra, etc., the thick leathery leaves of this *Ficus* will often retain their bright glossy appearance for a much longer period than most varieties of house plants including those just mentioned, even under more adverse treatment. The propagation of the rubber-plant is, however, the most difficult problem for the amateur plant grower to solve, in connection with its culture. Large plants have frequently to be cut back in order to secure a more shapely plant, or to keep its strong growing branches within reasonable bounds. It is seldom however, that the growth taken from an ill-shaped plant is successfully propagated. A description of some of the methods usually adopted by florists in the propagation of the *Ficus* will perhaps be acceptable to readers of the *Horticulturist*, who may perhaps have a plant that may require cutting back so as to make it more shapely and symmetrical looking. The pruning or cutting back does not injure the plant unless cut back too severely, as it soon breaks into new growth again if not cut back too far into the old wood. Even in the latter case it is only a question of time before it starts into growth again.

Mossing Cuttings.—This method of mossing partially severed cuttings of the *Ficus*,

is probably the best and surest method of propagation for the amateur to attempt. For the operation of mossing, a fairly strong and healthy branch or shoot should be selected. One or two of the leaves should first be cut away at the place selected for the base of the cutting. The selection of



FIG. 2568.

FICUS CUTTING SHOWING INCISION.

the part of the branch that is to form the base of the cutting is an important point toward being successful in the cutting taking root, as the wood must not be too old and hard, or too soft and pulpy. Usually, the wood is in a suitable condition about ten or twelve inches from the terminal point