outdoors

GROWING IN NUMBER
Plants homegrown from seed, divisions, and cuttings fill this verdant Cincinnati landscape.

Divide and Multiply

Tried-and-true propagation methods help budget-conscious gardeners create a yard that looks like a million bucks.

BY **MICHELLE TAUTE** PHOTOS **MATHEW BENSON**

To get many plants from a few, use these three easy techniques.

1 SOWING SEEDS

To encourage plants to reproduce by seed in flower beds, use no mulch and avoid applying herbicides. Delay deadheading old blooms, which will eventually shed viable seed if left alone. Seedlings usually sprout in spring and can be dug up and potted or left in place. Many species grow readily from seed—let nature reign, and see what happens in your garden.

2 DIVIDING PERENNIALS

To divide one perennial into two or three plants, dig up the root clump and separate it (if necessary, use a knife or spade). Pot or replant the "daughter" plants, which should each have at least two or three growing points. Spring and fall are ideal times to divide.

Clara Berger insists on doing all the weeding in her garden. "I don't trust anyone else to do it," she says. Although she and her husband, Charlie, collaborate on their suburban Cincinnati garden, she's the one who knows the difference between the weeds and volunteer seedlings of ornamental plants. It's an important distinction, because the Bergers have relied on their garden plants' natural ability to reproduce to create the lush landscape the couple enjoys today.

When the Bergers began gardening seriously in the early '70s, they needed to garden on a budget. By joining a local garden club and reading gardening books, Clara learned how to propagate her own plants. The effort paid off. Today, the garden looks like it cost a fortune.

FERTILE GROUND
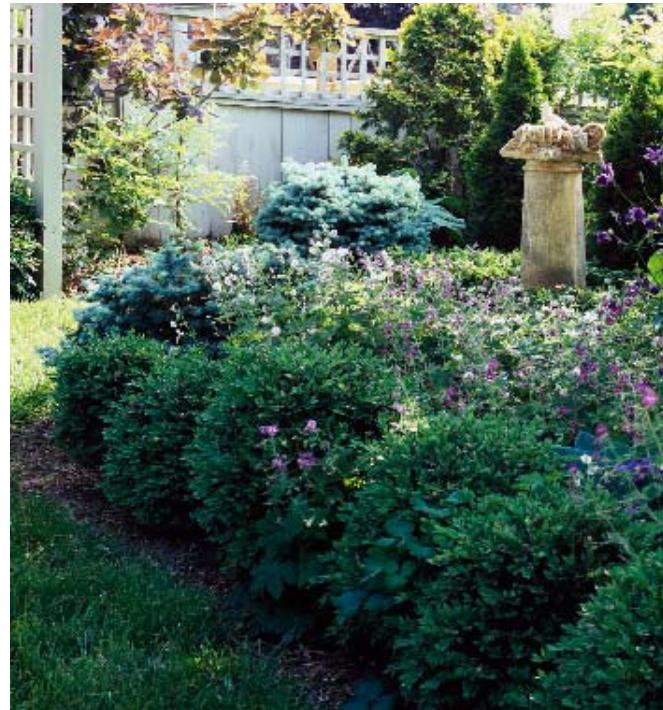Clara Berger has turned her garden, *above*, into a rich source of new ornamental plants.

3 SLIPPING SHRUBS

Many shrubs root easily by cuttings (or slips). Clara grew enough boxwood to form a long row of the plants in her garden, *right*. She uses what she calls the "Texas pot method," which requires two clay pots, one small enough to fit in the other, with corks in the bottom hole of each. She fills the large pot with sand, the small with water, then works the small pot down into the moist sand, *left*. Clara cuts 3- to 5-inch slips (shoots) from shrubs, dips the cut ends in root hormone to stimulate rooting, and places them in the sand. The inner pot needs to be refilled with water every few days.

Clara takes cuttings from her shrubs in August. After a couple of months, she removes those that failed to root, refills the water and places the setup in a cold frame for winter. In spring, the slips are ready to be potted.

To encourage seedlings in her flower beds, Clara forgoes mulch, which would inhibit the young plants. That means that weeds sprout readily, so Clara must weed vigilantly. As she does so, she notes which perennials are ready to divide.

To add new plant varieties to the garden with minimal cost, the Bergers also buy seed and raise colorful annuals indoors, transplanting them to the garden each spring.

In addition, Clara roots various kinds of shrubs using cuttings (see "Slipping Shrubs," *far left*), including boxwood, which plays a prominent role in her garden.

Besides a gorgeous garden, all this propagation means there are always plenty of treasures to share. The Bergers occasionally hold plant sales, or just give away specimens to friends. "I never go anywhere without a plant," Clara says.

PLANTS APLENTY
The progeny of Clara's garden, *right*, are potted and kept in a protected spot until they're planted.