

## Grafting Fruit Trees or Making New Fruit Trees from Old

Most people don't know that most fruit trees, shrubs, and ornamental trees are grafted or budded (a form of grafting). It is relatively easy to graft and a lot of fun to see the results.

Reasons for grafting are to:

- change a poor variety to a new or better or longer keeping variety;
- preserve old varieties;
- put more than one variety on one tree;
- put an edible variety on a crabapple;
- get high quality fruit quickly;
- repair or restore damaged trunks by bridge grafting (a form of bark grafting inserting a scion above and below bark damage).

The wood that is grafted into an established tree is called the scion. Scion wood is one year old or new growth from the previous season. It should be collected as close to grafting time as possible, but it can be cut and stored from January through March. Ideal size is ¼ inch in diameter. Store in plastic bags with moist paper towels in the refrigerator. Grafting is generally done in March through mid-April in our area.

You can make an easy bark graft by cutting smoothly across a branch to be grafted into (1 to 4 inches in diameter), then make a vertical cut about 1½ inch long through the bark at the top of the cut branch. Take a piece of scion wood about four or five inches long with three or four buds. Cut the base of the scion on one side with a long, smooth, sloping cut 1½ inches long coming to a point at the base. Insert the exposed cut of the scion down the vertical cut under the bark next to the wood of the cut branch. Push the scion down as far as the extent of the cut on the scion base. Place a scion every two to three inches around the branch. Use vinyl tape to help hold the scions tightly to the branch. Wax (grafting wax or toilet bowl sealing ring wax) the exposed cut surface and around where the scions were inserted. Buds on the scions will break later than normal. It is possible to see one to four feet of growth from an individual graft in the first year and fruit in the third year.

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