

Student 5.

Asexual: Cleft grafting.

The cleft graft is usually used to top work a tree which change the tree from one variety to another. When grafting on young trees you cleft graft on the trunk, where as on mature trees you graft on the branches no more than 2.5 metres in diameter, as older trees so not grow as well as younger ones after grafting.

The best time to do grafting of any kind is just as growth begins in the spring as it will grow together better.

Preparing the stock

It is best to get a knot free straight grained section of the branch as it is the easiest and best place to graft. You must saw off the branch at a perpendicular angle to the grain and when doing so make sure not to split or tear the bark so the cut is smooth. Then use a grafting tool to split the stock in the centre to extend 10 centimetres into the branch.

Preparing the scion

The scion wood for the cleft graft should be a centimetre thick, ideally have 3 buds on it and be inserted into the stock with the lowest bud just above the stock. Always note the bottom of a scion, as a scion will not grow if it is inserted upside down. When cutting start just below the lowest bud and make long smooth cuts towards the base and the cut should have surface of about 8 centimetres long. Do the same on the other side and ideally one side should be slightly thicker than the other.

Inserting the scion

Carefully open the crack with a grafting chisel or small wedge in the stock wide enough to get the scion inserted easily. While inserting the scion make sure the thicker side is outwards with the cambium in contact. After positioning the scion in the stock to ensure contact remove the tools you used to open the stocks a lot. When the scion is located the cut of the scion wedge should be almost invisible. Usually two scions are inserted into a slit one on each side of the stock so that at least one grows [1].

Waxing the cleft graft

Cleft graft should be waxed to cover all surface cuts to prevent drying out and you would need to check the wax regularly as sometimes cracks develop after the wax sets.

Caring for the graft

When the graft begins to grow you will need to give is lots of attention but never prune the branches that grow as it may kill the graft and you will have wasted your time.