

Collection, Labeling and Preserving Fruit Tree Scions

As you proceed with winter pruning, garden cleanup and propagation-related tasks, please keep in mind that we need our members to provide varieties of apple, pear, plum, quince, peach and, apricot. Please follow these guidelines for cutting, labeling and storing scion wood based on a method by Jean Williams, Peninsula Fruit Club, in “The Urban Scion Post,” Seattle Tree Fruit Society, published January 2014.

Cutting

The best time to collect scions is before the buds swell; stone fruit (plum, apricot, cherry, peach) in January and apple, pear and quince in February. Use terminal shoots from last summer's growth. Cut wood with well-developed, narrow, pointed vegetative buds. NOT round, plump flower buds. Disinfect shears between trees with 70% alcohol, 70% alcohol with 5% Povidone iodine, or Clorox or Lysol wipes.

- Select disease-free scions, exposed to good sun last year, 1/4 to 3/8 inch in diameter, about 10” long (to fit in a gallon zip lock bag).
- For grafting, select from lower 2/3 of the scion wood if possible, as that section contains more carbohydrates to support scion growth after grafting.
- Water sprouts can be used.

Handling

- Seal the cut ends and any broken areas of cambium with Doc Farwell's grafting seal, wax, or grafting sealant. [Latex paint also works fairly well.] Let the sealant dry/harden. Briefly dip the scion in 10% bleach solution, shake off excess bleach solution and let dry on a paper towel.

Labeling

It is important to label each piece since scion gets moved and identity lost.

- Label each piece of scion by wrapping with masking tape leaving a tag on which to print the variety name.
- Bundle like varieties together with a rubber band.

Storage

- The goal is to keep the scions in an atmosphere near 100% humidity, cool to maintain dormancy, preserve viability and, prevent microbial growth.
- Place a handful of slightly damp ground peat moss, to prevent microbial growth, in a gallon zip bag. [Wet newspaper or paper towel also works.]

- Place scions in the bag, seal, and place in a refrigerator between 33 and 35 degrees F.
- Don't store with ripening fruit. The ethylene gas encourages bud break and reduces chances of a successful graft.
- Check periodically to make sure scions stay moist. Add a few drops of water if needed.

Cautions

- Be sure of the variety.
- Don't take scion wood from below the graft-union, from roots or from low-vigor branches...as this will be the rootstock variety, not the variety you are trying to propagate.
- Don't take scion wood from currently patented varieties (unless you are only growing in your yard).

If you have any questions, please feel free to email or call me (206/855-9414).

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