Collecting and Storing Pecan Propagation Wood

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Successful pecan grafting and budding is dependent on proper collection and storage of propagation wood.

Propagation wood must be collected during the dormant season and stored until the spring propagation period.

Collecting

Collect propagation wood in February or early March while the tree is still dormant before the buds start to swell.

Vigorous one-year (current season) wood from the desired variety makes the best propagation wood for bark grafting, splice and tongue grafting, and patch budding. Two-year wood may be collected and used for propagation, but it is usually slow to start growing. Select healthy parent trees of a known variety that are free of rosette or disease.

The larger wood, 3/8- to 3/4-inch diameter, is best for patch budding, while medium-size scions, 1/4- to 1/2-inch diameter, are preferred for grafting. The best wood is found on young, vigorous trees and in the tops of mature trees. Trees pruned heavily (dehorned) will force vigorous new growth satisfactory for propagation wood.

Label all wood as it is cut from the parent tree to avoid errors in identification.

Do not allow the wood to dry out before it is placed in storage. Moist burlap sacks wrapped around the wood serve this purpose well.

Preparation for Storage

Handle propagation wood carefully to prevent damage to the buds. Remove the terminal end from the one-year-old wood. Make the cuts square. The best scions are usually taken from the center portion or basal two-thirds of each shoot.

Propagation wood is normally cut into six-, 12-, or 18-inch lengths and bundled according to large or small diameter size. Each six-inch length will make a scion.

Tie the propagation wood into bundles. Secure each end of the bundle with twine to prevent sticks from moving and dislodging the primary buds.

Make certain that each bundle is clearly labeled in a waterproof fashion. A mistake on pecan varieties can last a lifetime.

Propagation wood may be identified by making a slash cut on the lower end of a bud or graft stick and listing the variety name on the cut with a lead pencil.

Each bundle end may be dipped into melted wax or paraffin to prevent excessive drying while in storage. This step is not absolutely necessary.

Storage

Propagation wood must be kept alive and healthy during storage. It may be packed in moist (not wet) media, such as sphagnum moss, sawdust, or wood shavings. Wooden boxes, crates, metal cans with tight fitting lids, or polyethylene bags can be used as storage containers.

Propagation wood can also be successfully stored in a durable polyethylene bag (quart size or larger) without packing in moist media. Seal the bag airtight.

Store propagation wood where the temperature is 30° to

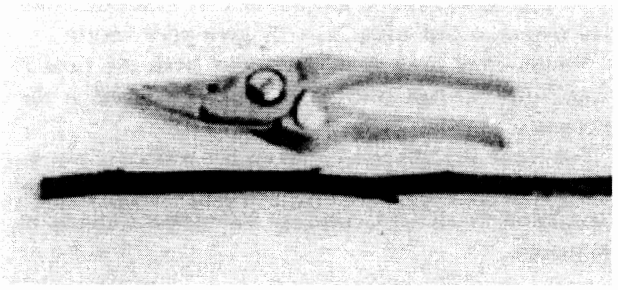

Figure 1. Optimum propagation wood for grafting is vigorous, 1/4 to 1/2 inches in diameter, healthy grayish green in color with plump, prominent, well-developed buds.

Figure 2. What may appear at first to be a single bud is actually a group of buds in vertical alignment. The smaller reserve buds will force into growth if the primary or secondary buds are damaged or lost.

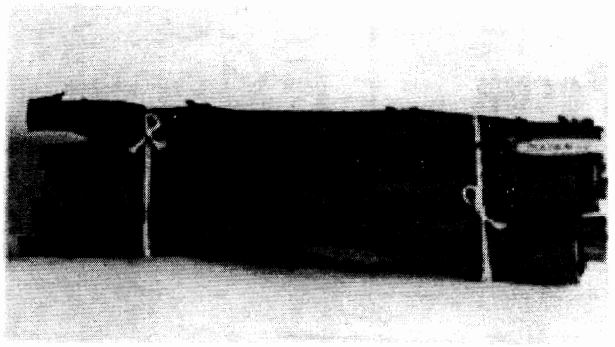

Figure 3. Securely tie propagation wood into bundles with twine. This will prevent the sticks from moving and dislodging the buds.

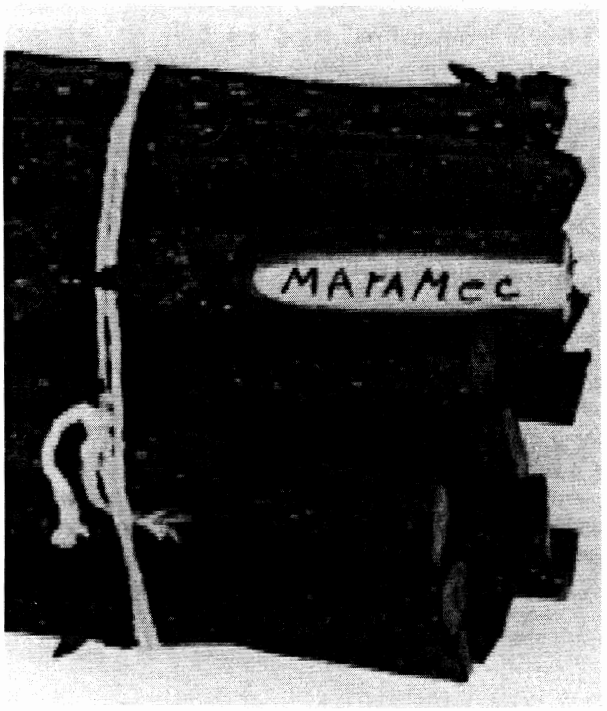

Figure 4. Clearly label propagation wood in a waterproof fashion. One method is to make a slash cut on the lower end of a bud or graft stick. Record the name of the variety on cut with a lead pencil. A mistake with pecan varieties can be long lasting.

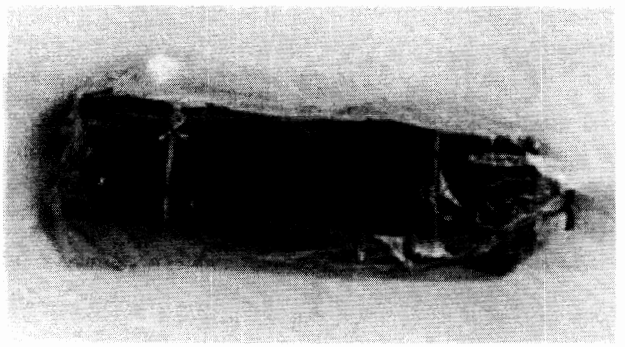

Figure 5. Sealed polyethylene bags make excellent storage containers. Store at 30° to 38°F. Do not freeze the wood!

35°F. The ice storage area of an ice plant is ideal. An ordinary household refrigerator is a commonly used storage facility. Do not freeze the wood!

When propagation season arrives, wood for bark grafting and splice grafting is taken directly from storage and used immediately. The sooner it is used after removal from storage, the better.

For budding, the wood must be removed from storage prior to propagation and seasoned so that the bark will slip. This can be done by packing it in moist media such as sawdust and storing at room temperature or above (up to 80° to 85°F) for four to seven days or until the bark slips readily. Always keep the wood moist. Use the budwood soon after it is seasoned. Buds from overseasoned wood usually give poor results.

Never allow the wood to dry out from the time it is cut from the tree until it is used. Dry wood is the chief cause of propagation failure.

For those that do not prefer to cut and store propagation wood, a list of growers that have wood for sale is available at all OSU county Extension centers in Oklahoma.

Original material prepared by Glenn Taylor.

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