



Splice and Tongue Grafting Pecans

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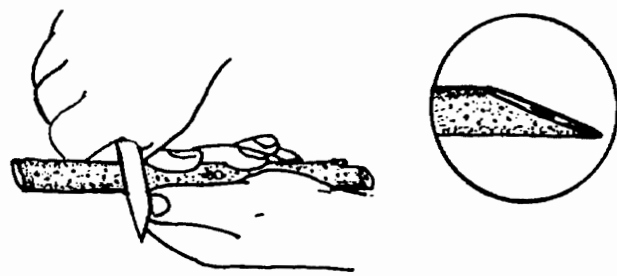
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The splice and tongue graft (also called whip graft) has many uses. It is well adapted for propagation of small seedling pecan trees and branches of larger trees. The best time to graft is from February to early April before growth starts.

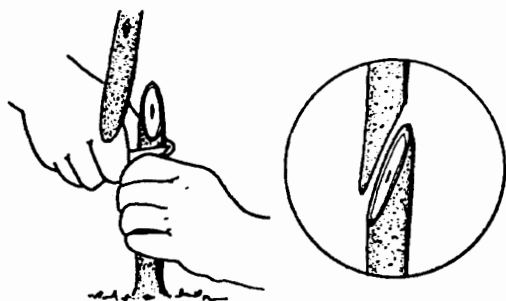
You will need a sharp knife and masking tape. Some grafters use orange shellac. In extremely dry, windy conditions, shellac may improve grafting success.

Use dormant one-year-old graft wood (scion). The diameter of the scion and stock (tree or branch) should be as nearly the same size as possible to assure maximum contact. The preferred size is 3/8 to 3/4 inch diameter. However, one-inch stocks and scions have been successfully used.

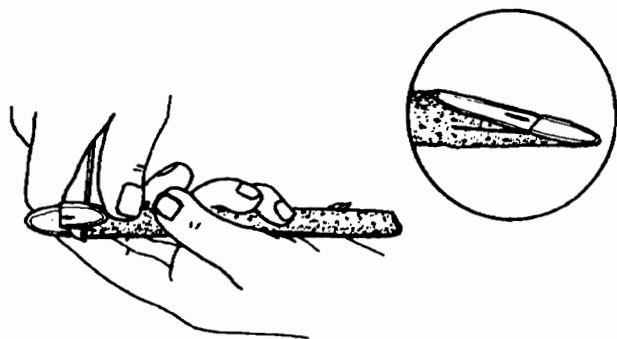
Each scion should contain at least two buds and be about six inches long. Small trees should be grafted near the ground line to reduce maintenance.



3 Make a similar sloping cut on the basal end of the scion. Hold the scion wood in one hand and cut by pushing the blade away from the body.



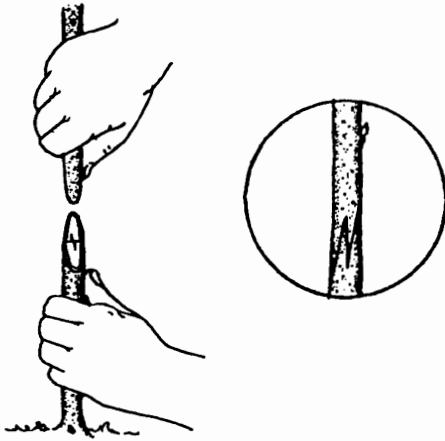
1 First, cut off the tree trunk or branch by making a long, straight, sloping cut. The face of the cut should be two to three inches long. Try to make the cut with one stroke of the knife.



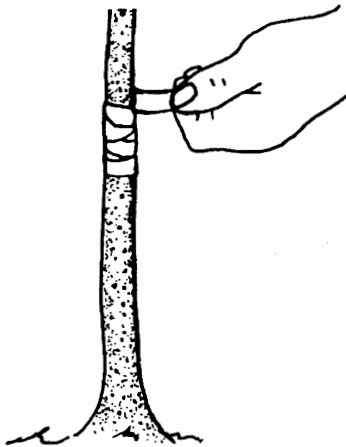
4 Make the tongue cut on the scion in the same manner as on the trunk or stock.



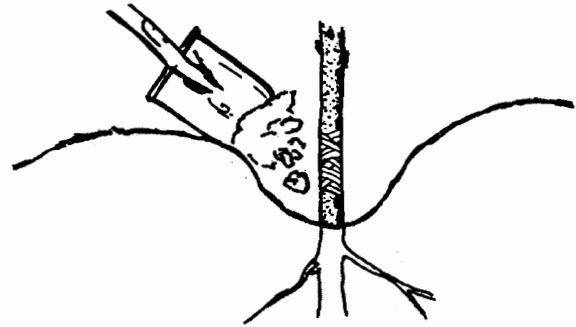
2 To make the tongue, start a cut about 1/3 the distance from the tip of the cutoff tree and press the knife slowly downward (do not split) about 2/3 the length of the bevel cut on the trunk. Do not loosen the bark.



5 Match the parts together. If the two parts are not the same size, be sure to make contact between the inner bark on one side and the lower end of the graft. If the cuts are made properly, the stock and scion will appear as one.



6 Wrap the union tightly with masking tape or a special grafting tape to exclude air and hold the union firmly together. Polyethylene budding tape may also be used for this wrap. The taped area can be covered with orange shellac to prevent excessive moisture loss.



When two-year-old scion wood is used, new shoot growth may be delayed as much as three weeks, but growth may be very rapid when it starts.

If more durable tapes (e.g., electrical tape) are used, they should be cut after vigorous scion growth begins to prevent girdling.

Nurserymen produce stocks for grafting by planting pecan nuts 3 or 4 inches apart in rows. The young trees are usually grafted at the beginning of the second or third year's growth. Vigorous trees that are 3/8 to 3/4 inch in diameter at 6 to 12 inches above the ground and spaced 8 to 12 inches apart are selected. Excess trees are removed to provide room for rapid growth so the trees will be ready for digging and transplanting the following season.

Some nurserymen remove 4 to 6 inches of soil from around the stock with a disc plow and/or a hoe. The graft is made at or below the original soil level. The soil is then replaced and firmed around the tree, covering the entire taped area (see illustration above). During extremely dry seasons, the soil should be moistened until growth is well under way.

If several nuts have been planted where a permanent tree location is desired, select the best seedling tree and remove the least desirable ones at the end of the first growing season. After one or two additional growing seasons, the selected seedling tree may be changed to an improved variety via a splice and tongue graft.

Young native or seedling pecan trees growing in a good location in fields or pastures can be propagated to improved varieties. Splice and tongue grafts can be made on the central leader at whatever height is necessary to accommodate the size of the propagation wood.

Remember to follow through with proper maintenance such as removal of native sprouts, cutting the tape, and, in some instances, staking the tree.

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