

THE ART OF GRAFTING

By Patty Gibbs

We've all done it; an apple falls into your yard from a neighbour's tree and the temptation is too much. So, after a quick polish on your shirt sleeve you bite into the best apple you've ever tasted. You contemplate saving the seeds as the juice drips off your chin over your fingers, but rumor has it that there is only a 30% chance of germination and you'll have to wait 6 to 10 years before savoring the same succulent apple! Also, you just happen to know that there is only a 5% chance of a seedling producing an edible apple. So, what to do?



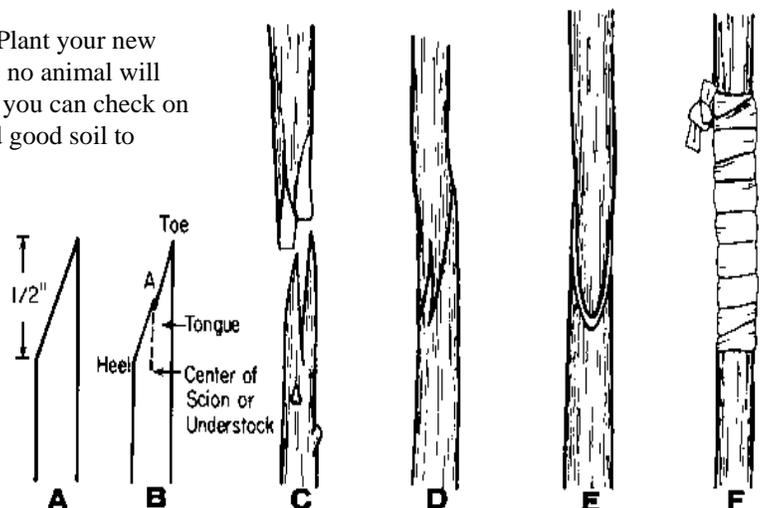
Besides the obvious, this would be asking your neighbour about the variety of the tree and seeking it out in the local nursery that you may or may not find since your last count of apple varieties was 258 from Akane to Zabergua. You could take matters into your own hands and be guaranteed of producing the same apple in three to five years. With this thought in mind you look down at the skeleton of the apple you just consumed and guilt washes over you. You could have shared it!

Grafting apple trees is a simple process that requires few and inexpensive materials. A good sharp jack knife, melted paraffin wax and electricians tape, these are things that most of us have in our home. Other than that you'll need a first years' growth cutting off your neighbour's tree and some rootstock. The recommended rootstock for Victoria would be from the Malling series or the Ottawa 3 rootstock. These can be bought for about \$2.00 each, and less if you purchase a 50 pack bundle. The scion wood, which is a cutting from your preferred tree can be purchased or given to you from people like your friendly neighbour. By fusing the two together like the diagram shown below, wrapping it tightly with a band of electrical tape and covering both the graft site and tip of the scion with paraffin you can create your own tree. A note of advise, for grafting beginners it is wise to graft 10 to 20 trees, since you'll need a little practice and your actual 'take' will be a percentage.

Now that you've grafted your first trees, care is critical. Plant your new grafts in a place that is protected by wind and rain, where no animal will wag a tale and break off the tender scion graft and where you can check on them easily. They will need plenty of sunlight, water and good soil to thrive in.

The Whip Graft as shown is done before trees come out of dormancy in the late winter, early spring; it requires a scion with 3 to 4 buds. It is advisable to graft in outside temperatures to keep the tree dormant.

If the harvest of scion wood is early, pop them in a plastic bag with a damp paper towel and place it in the fridge until you are ready for it. I've kept scion wood for 3 months in the fridge, but I think that's pushing it a bit.



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The Greater Victoria

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THE LATEST DIRT**

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Learn about "Greening Your Home" at the AGM!

This year's Annual General Meeting promises to be full of great "green" advice for the home. Join us to hear from knowledgeable guest speakers, a chance to win fantastic "green home" door prizes including an "Energuide for Homes" Assessment, and the usual great conversation and refreshments to tantalize the palate.

Due to its resounding success last year, the AGM will again take place on site at the Compost Education Centre on Sunday, April 9 from 2-4pm.

Stay tuned for more details!

If you have been a Compost Club member for a month or longer, you are eligible to vote for the Board of Directors and other motions. If you would like to nominate someone for the Board, please contact Sonya at 386-9676. Nominations will also be accepted from the floor.

Third Annual Organic Plant Sale!

Prepare yourself for our third annual organic plant sale!

Date: Saturday, May 13th

Time: 10am – 2pm

Location: Compost Ed Centre, 1216 N. Park St.

We will have another large selection of plants including annuals and perennial vegetables, ornamentals and medicinal and herbal plants.

See you there!

**UVIC CO-OP
EDUCATION STUDENT
JOINS THE CENTRE**

In January, the Centre was delighted to welcome Fern Wager as a new staff member. Fern joins us as part of the Service Learning Internship grant from the UVIC co-op education program. As a Compost Educator and Program Assistant, Fern brings a wealth of knowledge from her studies in Geography and Environmental Studies, not to mention her experience and enthusiasm for outdoor education. Over the 8 months she is with us, Fern will help launch two new education programs (Corey's Compost Story and the Interactive Sustainability Tour), get her hands dirty delving into designing a new worm breeding system, and providing invaluable assistance in 'spreading the dirt' on composting. Welcome Fern!



Many thanks to Anne Parkinson of the Biology Co-op Education Program for helping make this position possible.

We gratefully acknowledge the core funding support that we receive from the CRD and the City of Victoria. Additional support is provided by the Fernwood Community Association and through the generosity of our Compost Club Members and the residents of Greater Victoria.

The Art of Grafting (*continued from Page 1*)

When all the trees in your yard start to come out into leaf, your grafts are also coming out into leaf! The scion that you've placed on the rootstock suddenly has new growth and the paraffin wax is cracking, the electrical tape underneath is loosening. Any trees with withered grafts should be 'dismembered' meaning that the rootstock should be kept, but the un-taken scion removed. Save the stock for use next season when you find yet another apple variety that you wish to add to your collection.

Your new grafts are now a 'whips' in the following fall and can be transplanted into the site where you wish this tree to grow. This place should be well drained and sunny.

Depending on the rootstock you've chosen they should be staked. Plant your whips so that the graft site is 2 inches above the soil line. Pinch off any blossoms that appear in the first year so that the tree can establish a good root foundation and after that the world is your oyster! Look forward to an apple or two in the second year and it will multiply abundantly after the third year.

There are many benefits to grafting your own trees; you get the tree of your choice, custom made with the rootstock that is compatible for our area; you choose the size and if the mood strikes you other varieties can be grafted onto the same tree. Best of all the craving for another taste of your neighbours' apples won't have you digging through your son's winter gear looking for his balaclava while contemplating a midnight raid.

Good luck in your grafting endeavours. I welcome e-mail questions treehous@telus.net

Patty Gibbs

Patty began grafting in 1981 under the guidance of John Traas Sr. His name may not mean much to anyone, but he was the grafter of the thornless rose, so his contribution to romance has touched all of us. Since then Patty has maintained her own orchard and rootstock for the past 16 years and has helped others build orchards as well as holding workshops for local garden clubs. The diagram on Page 1 can be found at: www.edis.ifas.ufl.edu/images/532679142.

The workshop participants and the Compost Centre would like to thank Patty for her inspiring instructive workshop: Fruit Tree Grafting, on February 25th.

"Spreading the Dirt" at Seedy Saturday

The Compost Education Centre had another successful year at Seedy Saturday. A group of 8 volunteers helped staff this year's event, in which 1250 people attended. Our Wingdiggers and worms proved to be popular items as people excitedly dug around our worm bin to see our red wigglers, and purchased a great number of Wingdiggers. Many people also came by just to tell us how well their compost bins were doing. This is a good sign for the future as more and more people are becoming skilled composters – helping spread the dirt throughout Greater Victoria!

Special thanks to the following volunteers for their contributions in making this another successful outreach event: Angela Deering, Dana Griffith, Cat Beaulac, Natalie Cushing, Marlene Lovell, Jen Zacher, Danielle Lebeau-Peterson and Colleen Loader. Volunteer support of this kind helps the Compost Education Centre reach over 11,000 residents every year within the CRD.



"COREY'S COMPOST STORY" IS BORN

About a year ago the inspiration for a new schools program was born. This was to be an ambitious project that would thrill the K-3 set on the theme of backyard composting. It would be colourful, imaginative and interactive. A main feature would be a 15 or 20 minute puppet show, followed by hands-on activities and a song. Volunteer Janet Hockin and staff chased ideas for characters around until they began to settle in some reasonable form. Peter Allen, a highly-skilled volunteer artist, provided memorable renditions of the main characters as they took form. Corey (the intrepid apple core) and the beautiful Brownie (a leaf) meet and decide to make compost in the backyard bin by having a "browns and greens" party. They dance with friends till the compost is ready for the kindly gardener to use in her garden. Lucky teachers who book this pilot program will receive a resource booklet which includes a summary of "The Dance of the Browns and Greens" story, song, finger puppets, compost quiz and questions. Currently the Centre is seeking an affordable, collapsible puppet theatre suitable for travelling to schools. Contact us if you have ideas to share!

UPCOMING EVENTS

Date	Topic	Time	Cost
March 10-12	Compost Educator Volunteer Training Program	Fri 6-9pm 10am-5pm	\$100 deposit, \$90 returned after 30hr practicum
March 18	Cane Fruit Production	2-4pm	\$15/free for members
April 1	Composting Basics	11am-1pm	Free
April 8	Rainwater Harvesting	2-4pm	\$15/free for members
April 9	Annual General Meeting	2-4pm	Free
April 22-23	Introduction to Permaculture	10am-5pm	\$100/\$90 for members
May 6	Composting Basics	11am-1pm	Free
May 13	Organic Plant Sale	10am-2pm	Free admission
May 20	Brew and Use Compost Tea	2-4pm	\$15/free for members

Full Events Schedule can be found on our website at www.compost.bc.ca

**YOU MUST PRE-REGISTER FOR WORKSHOPS BY CALLING 386-WORM
OR EMAILING info@compost.bc.ca**

CALL FOR WORMS

The Compost Centre wants your worms! If you have some extra red wigglers in your worm bin or backyard bin, we could use them here at the Centre! Due to growing popularity, our waitlist for worm bins now extends into July of 2006! We are doing our best to help other Victoria residents compost in their homes, and now you can help too. Donations also qualify you for a \$40 tax receipt for each pound of worms you bring in! Any questions, just give us a call: 386-WORM. Happy Picking!

A FOND FAREWELL TO ANITRA



This month we bid farewell to Anitra Winje, Board Secretary, as she heads off to focus on her career horizons. Anitra plans to take a new course, delve deeper into her passion for writing and continue working with the Dean of Graduate Studies at UVIC. We would like to thank Anitra for her dedication over the past year and for always ensuring the collective memory of our board meetings was well documented! Anitra would like to share that she has greatly enjoyed working with the committed board members who are so passionate about the Centre and its mandate. She also says she has had the pleasure of meeting some fantastic folks and taking some inspiring workshops. She hopes to be able to volunteer with the Centre again in the future.

A Message from one of our Compost Club Partners: Lynne's Little Elf Garden Centre

Lynne's Little Elf Garden Centre on Goldstream Avenue is going into its 29th year and we are looking forward to seeing and helping all our customers with their gardening needs and questions.

Composting has always been a part of our clean up at the Garden Centre in the spring and fall. We use all the leaves and soil left in containers. We have two piles which we keep rotating. We turn these piles every couple of months and add an organic fertilizer to help break it down a little faster. We use our compost for our gardens and for mixing with soil for potting. Composting is such a wonderful way to build up your garden beds. You can also use it with your soil mix for containers and baskets. You will be surprised how much soil you'll recover for such a small effort.

We hope to see you at the Garden Centre and to help you with all your gardening questions.

Happy Spring,

Lynne Hedstrom-McAuley.

Our thanks to Little Elf Garden Centre for continuing to support our Compost Club by giving members a 10% discount. Please remember to show your compost club card when asking for discounts at all our partners' stores.

SEEDS FOR SALE



The Compost Centre is happy to announce that as of early April we will carry a wide selection of locally grown, organic vegetable and flower seeds for sale. We will have varieties from Full Circle Seeds (Sooke); Two Wings Farm (Metchosin); Stellar Seeds (Salmon Arm); Rebecca's Garden (Saanich) and others. To purchase your seeds, drop by the Centre from Wed-Sat from 10am-4pm (cash or cheque accepted). For more information, drop by or give us a call: 386-WORM.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR DONATIONS

J. Austin	R. Gillmor
E. Hogan	K. Cook
D. Sanford	L. Gaber
S. Johnson	L. Wicks

THE LATEST DIRT is published quarterly. The deadline for submissions for the Summer issue is May 15th, 2006. Submissions to the newsletter can be sent to the Compost Education Centre. Unless otherwise noted, articles appearing in this newsletter may be reprinted only in other not-for-profit publications, with the credit given to the author (when named) and **THE LATEST DIRT**.

