

## AFTER-CARE OF GRAFTED CAMELLIAS

Your recently grafted camellia consists of two parts, the understock, and the scion, (the small piece with two leaves attached). The two parts are held together by fine soft plastic tape (especially made for this purpose) which secures the scion into the cleft (cut) made in the top of the understock.

Your graft has a wire frame and plastic bag covering it. These serve two purposes,

1. To protect the plant and
2. To act as a mini hothouse for the plant.

The grafted plant should be kept in a shaded area, preferably under a bush where it can receive dappled sunlight for an hour or two each day. It should not be exposed to direct sunlight.

You will notice that the plastic bag mists up, and it is important that it remain so. Should the bag dry out it means that the plant is in need of water. **Do not remove the bag to water the plant.** Instead, place the pot into a bucket that contains just enough water to reach the top of the pot, and wait until you see the water come up from the bottom of the pot and be visible above the potting mix. You will notice that the bag swells as the air is forced out of the potting mix. Sometimes it is necessary to do this several times as you wait for the graft to grow.

Once the graft begins to grow, the next step is to decide when to begin to remove the bag. Please take notice of the previous few words (**begin to remove the bag**). This can take up to several weeks and should not be hurried. Too many grafted camellias die because of the bag being removed too soon, or too quickly.

When you choose to begin removing the bag pick a time when the weather will be cool for several days and when the scion has grown to about 10/20 cm high. Start on a cool day and one **when you will be home all day.** You are advised to check on the graft every fifteen or so minutes.

Steps when removing the bag, bearing in mind that it should be done in a shaded area. It is best to start early in the morning.

1. Begin by untying the wire that ties the bag to the pot but leave the plastic bag where it is, **do not attempt to remove the bag from the pot.**
2. Keep a very close watch over your grafted plant so that you will notice if wilting occurs.
3. The second stage, as long as there is no sign of wilting, is to lift the bag level with the top of the pot.
4. Stage three is to lift the bag a little further and continue to lift the bag by about 2 inches each day. **(as long as wilting hasn't begun to occur).**
5. Continue to lift the bag just a little each day until it is lifted over the wire frame.
6. Even at this stage it may be necessary to replace and tie the bag to the pot because of **Wilt.**
7. A good drink of water can be given at this stage

If wilting occurs at **any time**, immediately close up and tie the bag to the pot.

Wait for the plant to recover and after two or three days you can begin the process again.

It usually takes about two to three weeks to completely remove the bag. Some plants take less than others to become settled, but grafting usually takes place in August, so if you've waited all that time, surely you can wait just a little longer and extend the time of lifting the bag by just three weeks.

Once freed from the bag, place the grafted plant into a lightly shaded area but where it does receive a little sun, and keep it free of aphids. The plastic tape can be left on for between six to twelve months. After about twelve months to two years plant it into your garden, and keep in mind the fact that camellia reticulata grows best in the ground where it can spread its roots.