

# Cleft Grafting

## The Illawarra Method

### Why do we graft?

- *Some cultivars will not or are difficult to grow from cuttings*
- *Some cultivars are rare and grafting is the best method of propagation*
- *It is a way for members to share their camellias*
- *It may be the only way to obtain a desired cultivar*
- *Grafted camellias grow and flower quicker than cuttings*
- *It can be a very satisfying activity*

### When do we graft?

- *Mid to late winter is the best time*
- *Summer grafts can also be successful*
- *When the growth buds are almost ready to shoot*
- *In the Illawarra grafts are usually best done in June, July and early August*

### What do we need to do grafting?

- *Grafting Knife*
- *Secateurs*
- *Grafting Tape*



- **Also needed are:**
- *Wire to form a frame over the graft (straightened wire coat hanger are ideal)*
- *Clear plastic bags that are large enough and do not have any holes in them*
- *Methylated spirits for sterilizing tools*
- *Labels (old venetian blinds are great) for the name of the cultivar and the date grafted*
- *White permanent marker pen for pots and black pen for labels*
- *Fine wire or string to seal bags*
- *Scions*
- *Rootstock*
- *Patience*

### The Scion

- *Best taken from top of the bush*
- *Notice the growth buds on the example*
- *Does not have to be used the day it is cut*
- *If not using straight away seal in an airtight plastic bag and store in the refrigerator*



## The rootstock

- Needs to be a healthy, strongly growing plant with vigorous root development
- At least pencil thickness
- Straight stem for at least 155mm and free from side shoots
- Potted up at least 3 months prior to grafting
- Some say it needs to be dried out for at least a week but we believe it best to have moist potting mix

We find cultivars like Hiryu (Kanjiro), Jennifer Susan and most Sasanqua and Japonica suit our needs best

## How do we prepare to Graft?

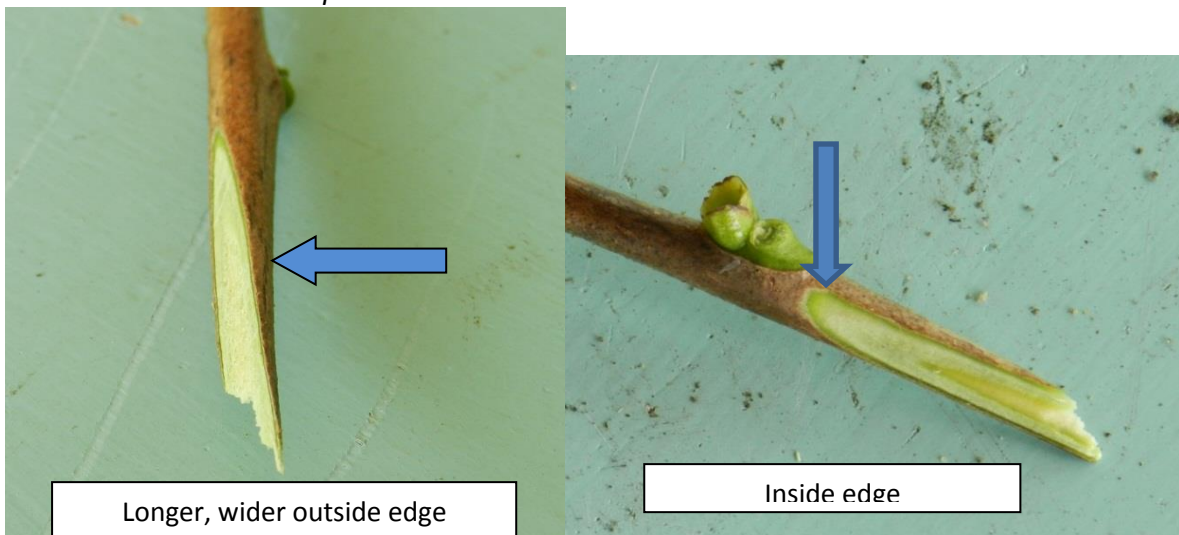
- Work in a well-lit area (bright daylight is the best)
- Have all tools clean and sharp and dip them in methylated spirits to sterilize
- Have all other needs at hand
- Choose the scion and rootstock

## Our Aim

- To match up the cambium layer of the scion with the cambium layer of the rootstock
- To allow time for the healing process to take place
- Be successful with our technique
- Have fun

## The Process

- Begin by selecting the scion to use
- Remove unwanted growth buds, 1 or 2 is enough
- Leave only 2 trimmed leaves at top
- Select a straight section of the stem and cut into a double wedge shape using one swift stroke on each side. We like the taper to be about 20-30mm long. Leave the side that will be to the outside wider than the inside. This is so that when the cleft is compressed the major contact point is where the cambium layers meet.
- Notice the green cambium layer just under the bark and the different widths and lengths of the inside and outside tapers.



## Cut and shape the rootstock

*Flat on top and tapered down the stem on one side, this is to prevent too much moisture collecting around the graft and to force the sap toward the graft*



- *Using your grafting knife or similar sharp knife*
- *Cut a slit or cleft down the centre of the rootstock for about 35mm using a gentle rocking motions and gentle pressure*
- *(NB. too much pressure and you will create too great a split)*



## Inserting the scion into the rootstock

- *Using your grafting knife open up the cleft in the rootstock*
- *Carefully line up the cambium layer of both parts*

*Note the gap above where they meet. This is called the window and it is where you are able to see if they are lined up*



## Securing the graft

- *Using thumb and forefinger hold the cleft in the rootstock together so that the scion is held securely in place and carefully and firmly bind the rootstock with grafting or budding tape*
- *Start below the cleft winding up to and over the tapered section*
- *Then wind back down and tie off*

*NB. Care should be taken to not disturb the union*



## Labelling

- *Label both the pot and the tag that is to go inside the bag*
- *Name of the cultivar and the date grafted are required*



## Bagging Up

- *Begin by placing the wire frame over the plant*
- *Next cover with plastic bag and tie off around the pot*



## Finally

- *Carefully place your newly grafted camellia in a sheltered spot where it will received a limited amount of filtered sunlight each day (two hours per day is good)*
- *Sit back and wait for the new growth to begin, it will take several months*

*For after care of grafted camellias refer to an article written by William Walker and Kevin Reiman*