

Collecting and Storing Graftwood

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Successful in-lay and four-flap grafting of pecans is dependent on the availability of suitable graftwood of the desired variety. The wood must be collected in late winter during the dormant season and properly stored until spring grafting time.

Collection

Collect the graftwood in late February to early March while the tree is still dormant. If the buds have begun to swell and grow, the wood is inferior and cannot be used successfully.

Select parent trees of the desired variety that are free of obscure scale, rosette, and disease. Young vigorous trees produce abundant, smooth and large-sized, current-season wood. Moderate-sized trees making normal growth usually have good graftwood in their uppermost limbs. Older trees can be cut back to force vigorous new growth satisfactory for graft wood.

Stick preparation

Select straight, smooth graftwood from 1-year-old wood 1/4- to 1/2-inch diameter. Cut shoots for grafts into 6-, 12-, or 18-inch lengths to give one, two, or three graft sticks.

Figure 1 is graftwood 3/8 inch diameter collected in February for storage as 6, 12, or 18 inch sticks.

Each graft stick should contain at least three buds or nodes. Seal the end of the graft sticks with melted wax, grafting paint, or orange shellac. Only 1/4-inch of the end of each stick needs to be treated. When the seal is dry, tie the graft sticks in bundles no more than six each. Label each bundle with permanent ink on a wood or metal write-on label. The variety and year should be recorded on the label. Figure 2 is a graftwood bundle labeled and ready for packing material and storage.



Figure 1



Figure 2

Packing material

Paper towels, sphagnum moss, or wood shavings can be used as packing material to prevent the graft sticks from drying out. Moist paper towels that have had all of the water squeezed out can be wrapped around each bundle. A second method involves placing the graft stick bundles in slightly moist sphagnum or wood shavings. The wrapped bundles are then placed in polyethylene bags. Plastic bags do not breathe and should not be used.

Storage

Refrigerate the bags of graft stick bundles at a temperature of 30 to 45 degrees F. Do not allow graftwood to dry out during storage. Take the desired wood out of refrigeration only as needed. Wood should not be heated and re-cooled during the grafting season.

Grafting

Trees will be ready for in-lay or four-flap grafting in the spring as the trees begin to grow. The bark should slip during this period. Keep the graftwood in a cool, moist place while grafting.

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<http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/propagation/collect/collect.html>