

SIMULTANEOUS GRAFTING AND ROOTING TECHNIQUES AS APPLIED TO RHODODENDRONS

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The many rhododendron growers that are here today probably wonder why I have come to talk on grafting rhododendrons at a time when grafting has been almost completely abandoned in favor of rooting cuttings. Although the latter method is much faster and easier and takes less space than grafting on unrooted understock, I do not advocate such grafting as a primary means of propagating rhododendrons. Rather, it may be useful as a method of rooting those few varieties which we are always trying to root, but never with much success; or for propagating the few cuttings of a new and very choice variety received late in the year, with very hard wood, when the percentage of rooting might be low.

We use 'Cunningham White' for the understock because it roots very easily and, unlike *R. ponticum*, it has a high resistance to root rot, it does not sucker from the base, and it has been compatible with all varieties that we have tried grafted on it.

I would like to illustrate the actual process now with a few slides.

A cutting of 'Cunningham White' is selected which is, as nearly as possible, the same size as the cutting to be grafted.

A fresh cut is made at the base of the understock leaving a cutting about four inches long. A $\frac{3}{4}$ inch slice is removed from two sides of the cutting.

A downward slanting cut is made into the understock ending just above the wound, for inserting the scion.

The scion is cut in a long wedge shape to match the cut in the understock, leaving a scion about three inches long; it is inserted in the understock, matching the cambium layers on both sides.

The graft is wrapped in the usual manner with a rubber budding strip, the base dipped into Jiffy-Grow, and then inserted into the rooting medium—under mist and with bottom heat. It is desirable, but not absolutely necessary, to insert the cutting deep enough to cover the graft.

Plants raised by this method develop rapidly and, because of the very low graft, usually develop roots above the graft and become own-rooted plants. We have used this method successfully from November through March.

MODERATOR BRIGGS: Thank you John. Now Rudy Wagner, whom you all know, will talk to us on his experiences with hard-to-root conifers. Rudy: