

have rooted them from softwood cuttings for several years now; we find such plants superior to the budded ones. We produce a beautiful straight whip without any knobs by budding or grafting high. We have a perfectly clean stem whether they are 30' clearing or 6' clearing and also find them to caliper up much better and we have a beautiful root system. We also root *Prunus cerasifera* 'Thundercloud', *Prunus triloba* and beach plum for the very same reason; we can produce plants with a much better root system and most important—without suckers.

THE OLD WAYS
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I was told not to talk too much about the old plant propagating ways. I don't agree with that view; we are all becoming part of history. So why don't we talk about it. I admire the old plantsmen who took the time to teach us the basics of this trade, and what a wonderful trade this is. If I compare the facilities and conditions they had to work with and under, then a salute is in order for them.

There is a great difference in the way they used to produce and the present methods. They were also more secretive about their work and the only exchange of information took place on Sunday morning either inside or outside the church. Location depended a lot on the type of sermon for that day.

Let's take the item — rhododendrons; making cuttings was unheard of, you had to graft them. That was done in the spring in cold frames under double glass. Sometimes with disastrous results, but there was no research or any other information available, and still they produced good saleable plants. A lot of real hard work went into it.

At the present time, we have every imaginable piece of information at our fingertips; we have come a long way. There are also several ways of producing plants that are completely done away with—layering, for instance, is little used anymore for ornamentals. Still that particular method for that time was a sure thing. It worked better with difficult-to-root items than any other method that I have ever seen. In the early days they did a lot more grafting than we do now. For instance, when the time arrived for the dormant grafting the whole family got into the act. During the day there was absolutely no time to waste on dormant grafting, that was done nights. There was no television to distract you. Everyone worked and practically everything was grafted right there in the home: wisterias, flowering crabs, lilacs, weigelias, golden chain, etc. etc. The next morning some

time was taken to wax all these things. Some of you old Boskoop people remember the old wax which was heated and sometimes got on fire—Hallelujah! what excitement! If the weather was right that day several of these items were planted right in the fields. No matter how cold, you go and plant. No planting machine, you sat on your knees on a board 8 inches wide and you planted everything by hand. There were two alternatives, freeze to death or get done, and in those times the word was “done”

In the fall we grafted hollies, roses, and clematis. Holly grafting was done in the later part of October; clematis was done about the same time. Roses were done later, but it was all hard work endlessly caring for these things. Then there was the outside spring job of grafting in the field, mostly on crisp cold days. Looking back on this I think we have come a very long way. All one does now is read the *Proceedings*, or the *American Nurseryman* and one picks up a tremendous wealth of information and advice. At this point, I could go into a discussion pro or con of some of the values written in these things but I am getting too old to argue. Nevertheless it is there for everyone to read and evaluate. My respect and admiration goes out to all the old real plantsmen who, sometimes under the worst conditions imaginable, made a success out of their operations.

Now we have mist systems, beautiful greenhouses, all the help we want from all sources. Computers are also in the act. We probably don't realize how lucky we are, but sometimes I doubt if we are any happier.

GRAFTING TREE PEONIES

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We have handled tree peonies for a long time, buying from Europe, then from Japan when our European sources dried up. Japanese suppliers we found to be not too reliable in supply—and naming especially—so we decided to propagate them ourselves.

Surveying the stock available to us, we felt that only the best would do. Up to this time we bought what the supplier offered, often inferior varieties. European varieties, while being developed from the same source, are quite distinct from Asiatic varieties in that they are usually fully-double, large-flowered, often so heavy that the stems cannot carry the bloom which then is hidden by foliage.

Asiatic varieties, in contrast, are of semidouble to double types with stiffer stems which carry the flowers well above the foliage. There are exceptions to both rules of course.