

Ag Column
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Grafting Trees Yield Identical Clones

Come to one of our grafting workshops and learn a new skill. The workshops are scheduled for Tuesday, March 20 at Ron Ramsey Ag Center in Blountville. Call 423-574-1919 for more information.

We've all wanted to plant an apple or other fruit seed like Johnny Appleseed. Today, we have thousands of varieties of fruit each with their own size, color, flavor, texture, disease and insect resistance. All fruit trees must be grafted to reliably reproduce a tree that will yield the same fruit. If you plant an apple seed, you will get an apple tree, but you probably won't be happy with the results. The fruit will have the characteristics from one of two parents.

A grafted tree is a clone produced by joining a rootstock and a cutting from an existing tree. Fruit trees are grafted for a number of reasons. Probably, one of the most important reasons is mass-produce desirable varieties. Grafting is a form of asexual reproduction. Another important benefit of grafting is the ability to control the size of the mature tree. By grafting, you can reduce the size of a tree by as much as 75%. One disadvantage of a dwarf tree is their poor root system. Due to lack of a good root system, a dwarf tree will need support for the life of the tree to prevent the tree from falling over.

By selecting different rootstocks, we can give the tree resistance to diseases such as collar rot and fire blight and insects such as woolly apple aphid.

Other reasons to graft are repair of a damaged tree, to change the cultivar or have multiple cultivars on the same tree.

A little more about the grafting workshops where you'll get one-on-one instruction. We will have a selection of scion wood for you to choose from. If you want a specific tree, you probably should collect your own scion since we may not have your specific tree. Water sprouts from the tree make the best scions and should be cut from the tree before the buds begin to swell.

We will have grafting knives and pliers for you to use as well as grafting tape, tree tags, and rootstock. You will need to call our office to register and select the rootstock you would like to reserve.

Also want to mention we are having a **PHOTO CONTEST** at the Ron Ramsey Ag Center. You can find more information about this contest at www.ramseyagcenter.com.

If you are interested in learning to graft fruit trees, call the UT Extension Sullivan County Office at 423-423-574-1919 for more information.