

BENCH ROOT GRAFTING OF WISTARIA

D.J. WICKENS

Waterers Nurseries

Bagshot, Surrey

Understocks. Sow the seeds, which are usually obtained from the Continent, in prepared seed beds at the beginning of May. Cover with 1/4" sand. Inspect after about ten days to check that they have chitted; if so add a further 1/4" of sand. Do this in two stages as we have found decay to be a problem if the seeds are covered too deeply initially.

About early December, or when the leaves have fallen, lift the understocks. It is important to lift them with as much fibrous root attached as possible. If using an undercutter, check that the blade is 10" to 12" below the surface. Store the seedlings in boxes between layers of moist peat in a cold glasshouse.

Bench Preparation. In January prepare a heated bench with a 50/50 peat-sand mix to a depth of 5". Ensure this is well moistened. Heat bench to 55°F. Switch on 2 to 3 days in advance. Cover with a polythene tent.

Collection of Scion Material and Preparation of Grafts. Take scion material from stock plants and dip in Captan solution. Cut scions into sections about 6" long with three buds. The scions should have 1-1/2" of stem below the bottom bud. The rootstocks should be washed free of soil. Place on a wire tray to drain.

Head the rootstock below the cotyledons and trim the roots. It is possible to use sections of the understock. Use a reverse veneer graft; ensure that the cambium layers meet. Use rubber ties about 5-1/2" × 1/8", starting the tie from the lower end. Leave 1/8" gap between ties for callus expansion. Tie the full length of the cut, finishing with half hitch with end coming out on top so that it does not run.

Place grafts in trenches in the prepared case, space evenly and neatly. Cover union to 1/2" to aid callusing. The polythene should be about 6" above the top of the scion. Leave for about six weeks. Ventilate about once a week for first three weeks, then more frequently. Check for damping off and that the compost is still moist.

When root development starts, pot plants into 50/50 peat sand mix, making sure union is below compost level. It is important to be able to shade the plants at this time of the year. When potting, return plants to a similar environment to that of the propagation house.