Gulf Coast Fruit Study Newsletter

Volume 19, Issue 3 | Edited By: Ethan Natelson | August 30, 2005 Meeting

Current Meeting:

Our program will begin on **August 30, 2005** at **7:00 p.m.** at the Extension offices at the Bear Creek Facility. The meeting will feature lectures, as well as the tasting of locally grown pears, pomegranates and jujubes.

Contact Us!

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Top-working and Grafting Grape Vines

Those who did not attend our recent tours of an apple orchard and a winery in the Santa Fe, Texas, area missed out on a very interesting excursion. The bus that was made available to us at no cost was very roomy and quite comfortable, unlike the old school buses we used several years ago, and was air-conditioned. The driver was practicing for the Indianapolis 500 and got us to the locations in short order. Joe Swain has a 12 year old apple orchard, primarily with **Anna** and **Dorsett Golden** grafted to EM VII rootstock. I would not have suspected that this root system would have survived this long in our soils, but Joe indicates he only has lost about 10% of the original planting. It is clear from his efforts that with attention to the necessary spraying programs, apples can be successfully grown here. We are hoping that some soon-to-be-released Cornell-Geneva resistant rootstocks and some newer low-chill cultivars may again stimulate interest in apples here in the Houston area.

Our next stop was the Haak Winery, which is a very well-kept secret in our area. I brought back some wine produced there for one of my friends, who is a wine collector, to assess, and he described the wine as fruity and similar to an excellent Beaujolais. They do have a nice vineyard, with two varieties, but Mr. Haak indicates that these grapes only provide about 2-3% of the grapes he uses in his production. He has even imported grapes from as far away as California.

Coincidentally, in the May 2005 issue of The Good Fruit Grower, there was an interesting article on re-grafting a productive grape orchard in Washington State. It seems that the **White Riesling** grape is making a strong comeback, and this grower decided to convert 17 acres of **Cabernet Sauvignon** vines to **Riesling**, by grafting. This procedure is far cheaper than pulling out the existing vines, with their well-established root systems. The new grafts on a strong root system rapidly come into full production. Here several thousand vines were grafted with the charge for each one at $1.75.

The grafting is done using dormant scion wood collected in January and February and stored in the refrigerator between 32° - 36° F. The actual grafting is done in Washington State in March. This is accomplished before the rootstock is fully active to prevent excessive "bleeding" from the graft incisions on the rootstock.

From the description, the technique is to cut the main trunk about a foot above the ground and insert the scions at an angle, about 3 inches below the crown, by a side graft. There are many styles of side grafts that are effective for grapes, as shown in the figure. The type described appears to be the one I have labeled as the "side cleft". Here, a simple angle slice is made on either side of the trunk and the two beveled scions inserted with their 2 buds facing out or in the direction growth is desired. They wrap the graft site tightly with clear or white grafting tape which

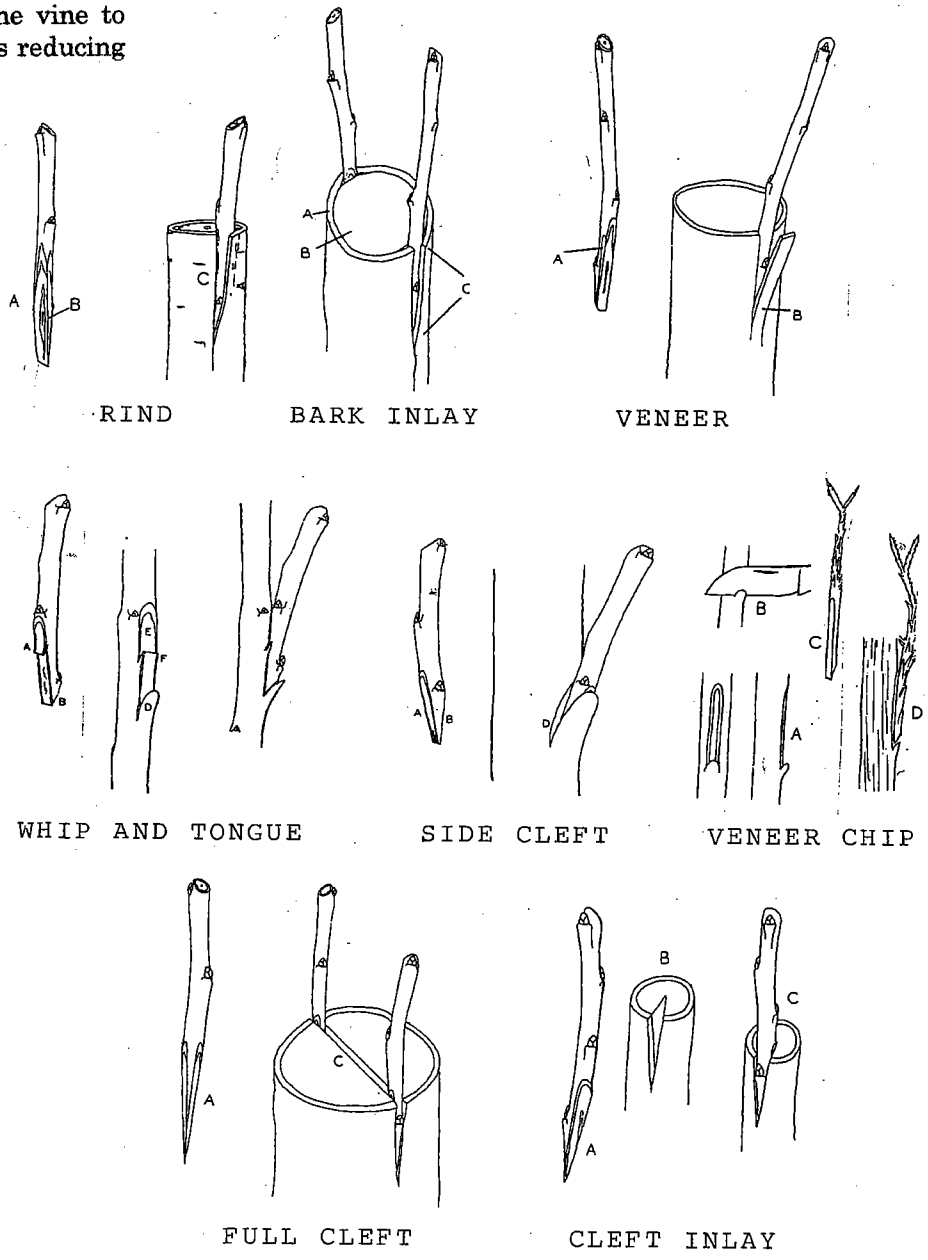
(continued on next page)

Top-working and Grafting Grape Vines (continued)

is then painted with black asphalt paint, allowing the graft site to absorb heat and speed healing. White latex paint is then applied to the scion to prevent desiccation (***actually black vinyl electricians tape is just as effective and far less messy, and the scion may be quickly and neatly sprayed with clear acrylic from a spray can, also shortening the procedure***).

If the grafting is done later, when the bark on the vine is slipping (generally around April in Washington State), various types of bark inlay grafts can be used, as also shown in the top row. To combat bleeding, small incisions are made below the graft site at the base of the vine to allow the bleeding to occur there, thus reducing the pressure and stopping bleeding higher up at the graft site. According to these authors, they get 90% - 95% takes with the side cleft graft, or the cleft inlay. This is a better success rate than with the bark inlay graft done when the rootstock is more active, and that we commonly use here for pecans and persimmons. Additionally, bark grafts are more prone to breakage. Full cleft grafts are rapidly done and also highly successful in take rate, but it requires a long interval to get full healing of the cleft, which may open wider as the scions grow.

SIDE GRAFT TECHNIQUES



FUTURE TOURS

If you have suggestions on interesting locations for future tours for our group, please let Yvonne Gibbs or other members of the planning committee know. We have use of the buses for a 12-hour time span, so that we can travel a considerable distance. A single bus accommodates 38 individuals and has a large storage compartment in the rear for coolers, etc. With proper advance reservations, these buses are made available to us at no cost.

JELLO FIG PRESERVES

These preserves take on the flavor of the Jello selected; we tried strawberry and they were excellent.

In a 4-quart microwaveable bowl, mix 3 cups of mashed figs (this takes about 45 LSU Purple figs—less if a larger variety), one 0.6-oz. package of Jello, 2 and 1/2 cups of sugar, one tablespoon of fresh lime juice and stir well. Cover and microwave on high for 10 minutes or until boiling. Stir again. Microwave an additional 3 minutes on high. Pour into sterilized jars and seal immediately. This recipe will make five 6-oz. jars.

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Upcoming Meeting Details

Date: August 30, 2005

Time: 7:00 p.m.

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Texas Cooperative EXTENSION
The Texas A&M University System

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