Is It Too Late for Grafting?

Question: Some of my grafts took, and some died. Many of my late grafts seem to have done neither. These were whip and tongue grafts done a bit too late. Do you suppose they might grow next year - like dormant buds? Do you suppose the buds are dead but the wood's still alive?

Answer: It is not too late to do grafts yet. I did some yesterday: Bark, and whip, also splice of dormant wood to growing trees. I also will be continuing to graft the same plus greenwood for at least 2 more months yet. If you make a nick with a knife or fingernail into the scion and it is not green underneath it is gone.

Grafting Results

Grafting results this year have been great, but I think it may be due to timely rains, which we've not had, than to any great improvement in grafting techniques.

Walnuts

I attempted a number of early chip-bud grafts, as espoused by my friend Gordon Nofs. I tried them with a dozen or more pecan & hickory varieties and a handful of different black walnuts and heartnuts without success. We had two nights of sub-freezing temperatures in early to mid-April, following a couple of weeks of temps in the upper 80s - I had several pecan, hickory, pawpaw, and mulberry grafts that were just starting to push leaves, but the freeze killed them outright. Perhaps without the late freeze, I might have had some success with the chips.

Walnuts are difficult. I've tried chip buds, 4-flaps, bark grafts, Gray grafts, Wood Sap-stopper modification of the Gray graft, and none have worked all that well for me. Guess the few takes I have gotten with black walnut or heartnut this spring have been with something of a modified graft bark(kind of like the Wood Sap-stopper) - I'm not completely decapitating the stock, just cutting 7/8 of the way through, breaking it over, and leaving it attached to 'draw sap' for about 2 weeks before I cut it off.

I'm having good success with pecans, hickories and hicans this year – best I've EVER had! My success rate is probably running in the neighborhood of 80+%. I have been doing both 3 or 4-flap(banana) grafts or simple bark grafts; both are working quite nicely. I usually wrap these with Parafilm, then overwrap with a split 3/8"x.020 budding rubber, and overwrap that again, with Parafilm. I have been making 'girdling' cuts below the completed graft, as recommended by my grafting mentor. Some of the pecans & hickories have pushed shoots a foot or more in length.

Oaks have been variable, but largely dependent on condition of the scions. Had 100% takes of "McDaniel" BurXEnglish and overcup scions that I collected personally, but 0% with bur & white oak scions sent by friends. They were shipped too wet, and I didn't check moisture levels before I stored them.

Fruit Trees

Apples have been running close to 100% - I've done simple whips, clefts, and bark grafts, depending on size of scions & available rootstocks. The only failures occurred when the not-so-good scionwood was not very good to begin with, especially with the Chestnut in one particular spot.

Persimmons are running close to 100% - have grafted close to 50, I guess, and the only failures have been with scionwood that was in less than ideal condition. I do a simple bark graft, wrap with parafilm, then overwrap with a .010 budding rubber.