
Grafting Study Day

On 29 February and 1 March 2020 members of the society were joined by members of the German Dendrology Society for a grafting study weekend. **EIKE JABLONSKI** organised the event in Luxembourg and describes some of the techniques that were discussed and demonstrated.

The horticultural department of the Lycée Technique Agricole (LTA) in Ettelbruck, Luxembourg, has a unique collection of trees in the adjacent arboretum. It houses the 'forgotten' cultivars of many woody genera, mainly of Central European origin. It serves as a gene bank for these cultivars which are propagated in its propagation unit. The collection is part of the 'lost cultivar project' that I launched, with member collections and nurseries around Europe.

A few years ago, within the group of the IDS young dendrologists, the idea grew up to have a future workshop on grafting; at that time the initial idea was to enable collection holders or horticulturists working in collections or institute gardens, to be able to propagate their rare or old, senescing plants; in this case, the cultivars of woody genera, which are normally too difficult to propagate from cuttings, and impossible to do so by seed. Luxembourg would be a good location for it, not only having all the technical equipment for grafting and work space for 30 people, but also because it is in a more or less central location on mainland Europe, accessible by car, train or plane.

When the first announcement was made, very little interest was shown. Three IDS members signed up, too few to run the workshop. A second and a third call unfortunately did not generate a satisfactory increase in members wishing to participate. To give those who had already signed up, the



One of the unusual cultivars grafted included *Prunus spinosa* 'Pendula'.



Above left, *Malus* 'Abraham' one of the unusual cultivars grafted and right, *Prunus insititia* 'Aucubaefolia'

opportunity to still take part, it was decided to offer the workshop to members of the German Dendrology Society (DDG). Within two weeks, more than ten members of the DDG were showing interest in participating.

For the organisation of space and restaurants, and of rootstock, grafting knives and secateurs, the last day of registration was close. But what a surprise! Ten more IDS members or horticulturists from collections with an IDS affiliation signed-up and the total number of participants rose to nearly 30!

The grafting weekend was intended to instruct participants in the practical skill of grafting—so very much a hands-on course, with theory being included as part of the introduction. Further discussions on grafting principles took place throughout the workshop. The group was mixed, some participants had a basic knowledge of grafting, whilst others had no experience at all. Participants, aged between 20 and 75 years, came from France, Belgium, The Netherlands, Britain, Germany and Luxembourg (some from renowned collections). Over the two days, we had many discussions and exchanged ideas and addresses, a very friendly atmosphere throughout. Languages spoken during the course made this a truly international event: French, English, Dutch, German and Luxembourgish of course!

As senior lecturer at the Ettelbruck Agricultural College, I first gave an introductory talk on the theory of grafting, supported by the two junior lecturers: Pascal Maringer and Thomas Rob, both skilled grafters themselves.

Easy but effective side grafting methods were demonstrated. Training material was provided—branches of *Salix* and *Cornus alba*. A few hours of training of the different grafting techniques followed, after instructions in safety precautions—knives and secateurs are sharp tools that can be quite dangerous (as some of the participants realised in due course).

The afternoon became more interesting—real grafts have been made! Rootstocks for plums, cherries, apples, but also *Euonymus*, some *Acer*, oaks, *Sorbus*, *Tilia*, and more were provided by LTA. Scions, the one or two year old branches of cultivars which are ready to graft, had been collected in the arboretum of



Introduction and discussion on the art of grafting before the workshop got underway.

the LTA (a large number of crab apples from the ornamental *Malus* collection, as well as flowering cherries, ornamental plums, peaches and blackthorns) or had been brought to Luxembourg by the participants. Some brought scions of their own selections, and this was a welcome opportunity to propagate rare and unknown cultivars. This also was one of the aims of this workshop—to enable collection holders to propagate their own selections of rare, declining trees, and to exchange uncommon cultivars between the participants.

We had a whole day of grafting, only interrupted by short breaks for snacks and drinks from the buffet. A table with books on the subject, on the special collection genera and other interesting features was on display as well.

Unfortunately, one participant must familiarise herself more intensively with the grafting knife. A deep cut in her finger was so severe that it meant a visit to the neighbouring clinic (fortunately just 200 m away) and an added opportunity to get to know the Luxembourg health system! I felt very sorry for this interruption but later on, when we were all sitting in a restaurant having a meal, some hours later, she was able to rejoin the group! I very much hope that everything has since healed.

The second day was much the same as day one: participants continued to graft; a small group also took the opportunity to take part in the winter twig identification workshop; material out of the arboretum had to be identified, after a short lecture on the theory of winter ID.



Malus transitoria 'Carmen'



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Above left, winter twig identification workshop and right, winter-flowering twigs on display.

A farewell snack closed the study period, and participants had hopefully gained much knowledge of grafting and a few had their own created grafts in their luggage to take home where they could be nurtured and successfully grown into mature plants. The success rate in Ettelbruck was around 85%, a very good result for the 'young grafters', congratulations! And the collections of the LTA can now be enriched by many rare varieties of woody plants.

Thank you to all participants for their very positive contribution; it was a friendly, very inspiring gathering of people from the world of professional and amateur horticulture. And it was a successful joint event of two dendrological societies, IDS and DDG! It was hard to imagine that only a few days later the coronavirus pandemic would begin to take hold and the borders of Europe closed. So these IDS grafting study days were one of the last international events to be held in Luxembourg (and much of Europe) in this strange year 2020 without restrictions, masks and social distancing. Who would have thought this possible?

An abridged list of what was grafted during the IDS workshop:

Carpinus betulus 'Sir Stanley', *Corylus avellana* 'Variegata', *Crataegus monogyna* 'Biflora', *C. monogyna* 'Goldstein', *C. monogyna* 'Stricta', *C. monogyna* 'Xanthocladus', *Euonymus europaeus* 'Albus', *E. europaeus* 'Intermedia', *E. europaeus* 'Aucubaefolia', *E. europaeus* 'Chlorosaca', *Malus* 'Abraham' 20070026 B, *M. 'Golden Vlies'* 20040235, *M. 'Gwendolyn'* 19571720, *M. 'Herkenrode'* 96174, *M. 'Ormiston Roy'* 19750052 A, *M. baccata* (Bokrijk Select Group) 'White Tilkin' 19920586, *M. baccata* 'Andreas Baertels', *M. doumeri* 20130169, *M. robusta* 'Variegata Persicifolia' 19571742, *M. transitoria* 84577, *M. transitoria* 'Carmen', *M. × magdeburgensis* 19591907 A, *Picea martiniezi*, *P. pungens* 'Pendula', *Prunus* 'Autumn Glory' 83118, *P. 'Bokrijk Select'* 19920032, *P. 'Buksenspring'* 20190410, *P. 'Hanagasa'* 16235, *P. 'Jose'*, *P. × subhirtella* 'Marie Mallet' 20140262 A, *P. 'Pandora'* 92995, *P. 'Sunset Boulevard'* 465, *P. armeniaca* 'Triumph von Trier', *P. incisa* 'Koyou-no-mei' 20140216 A, *P. incisa* 'Mikinori', *P. insititia* 'Aucubaefolia', *P. lannesiana* 'Ichyo' 00005332, *P. mahaleb* 'Pendula' 00005682, *Q. robur* 'Appleblossom Weeping' 20190096, *P. mume* 'Beni-Chidori', *P. mume* "Omoi-no-mama". *P. mume* 'Peggy Clark' 19970079 A, *P. mume* 'Sage' 20190095, *P. mume* 'The Geisha', *P. spinosa* 'Atropurpurea', *P. spinosa* 'Pendula', *P. spinosa* 'Plena', *P. × subhirtella* 'Dahlem', *P. × gondounii* 'Schnee' 92596, *P. × yedoensis* 'Martine', *Quercus petraea* 'Sanct Basle', *Q. robur* 'Wemlighausen', *Q. × hickelii* 'Mme. Aimee Camus', *Sorbus commixta* 'Embley', *S. japonica* var. *calocarpa* 19990378, *S. × arnoldiana* 'Golden Wonder' 19940070, *S. folgeri* (upright form), *Tilia platyphyllos* 'Bad Driburg' (variegated), *Tilia platyphyllos* 'Pendula', *T. japonica* 91519, *T. monticola* 20140908, *Ulmus glabra* 'Sargentiana', *× Cathamalus* 'Max', (*Chaenomeles cathayensis* × *Malus domestica*), *× Sorbaronia fallax* 'Lijkornaja'.