



HINTS ON CAMELLIA PROPAGATION

SEEDS

Seeds generally start to ripen around March when many seedpods will have opened exposing their seeds, which should be harvested as early as possible. Those pods which have not yet cracked will do so very soon after picking.

The sooner seeds are planted the easier it is to have them germinate. They do best in a 50/50 mixture of damp peat or sphagnum moss and sharp sand, placed in a sealed bottle and kept in a warm place. The first signs of growth will be noticed after about a month or two when the first, the radicle (root) will appear growing downwards and then the plumule (stem) will begin growing skywards.

When planting out into say 4 inch (10cm) pots, the tip of the radicle can be nipped off to promote a branching root system.

Besides growing potentially interesting seeds, it is worth growing a number of Sasanqua seedlings each year so that after 3 or 4 years there is a good supply of grafting stock. There is a slight chance of getting something different in flower colour, form, or plant habit. Some growers like to use *reticulata* understock for retics and the chances of an interesting flower (at least in the mind of the raiser) are somewhat better.



The photos are of recently germinated *reticulata* seeds potted into small pots. They have started to develop tiny leaves, which probably will not grow much until the weather warms up. Interestingly once they were brought out into the light, the plumule (top bit) does not grow any longer; it just starts to develop leaves. These seeds which were sown fresh only three months ago are not little plants with roots and leaves, whereas of the Sasanqua seeds sown at the same time only one has produced a small radicle (root), most of the others are just starting to split. Therefore, for best results, plant seeds as fresh as possible and keep them warm.

CUTTINGS

Cuttings are usually best taken in December and January.

Cut 150mm long cuttings in the cool of the day, cutting just under a leaf node.

Remove all the leaves except the top 2 or 3. If these are very large cut them in half. The theory is that, by reducing the size of the leaves, you will cut down on water loss from the cutting.

Scrape the bark at the bottom of the cutting using a sharp pair of secateurs. Take a narrow strip down either side of the bottom centimetre to the base. The new roots will form on the sides of this scarred area.

Dip the end of the cutting into some Rooting Hormone gel or powder, if available.

Fill a small pot with seed raising mix, or potting mix mixed 50/50 with sharp sand. Make holes in the mix about 2-3cm apart, with a twig, and insert the cuttings about half their length.

Water thoroughly to firm the cuttings. Place in a shady spot, and water twice a day. Or cover with a plastic bag held up by sticks, or individual small clear plastic glasses.

Check for root formation after about six weeks, or wait till they are showing plenty of new growth when they can be planted into individual pots.

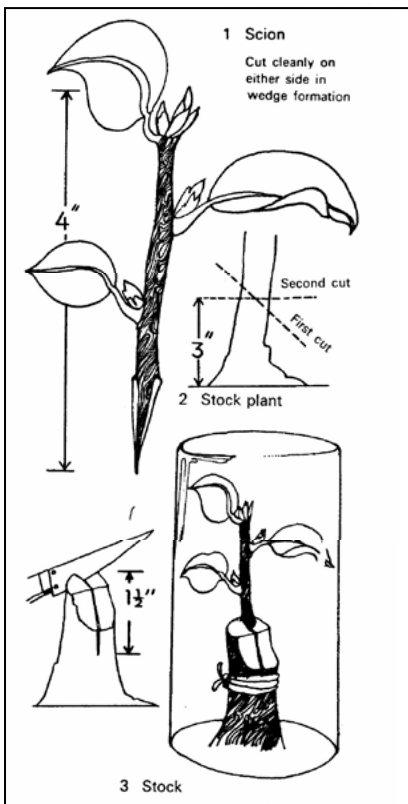
GRAFTING

Cleft grafting is suitable for a scion with a smaller diameter than the rootstock, and **whip and tongue grafting** suitable for scion and rootstock of similar size.

Try out some grafting technique with *Sasanqua* prunings!

Camellias are usually grafted when the cultivar does not strike well from cuttings, or creates a poor root system. With a new variety a small scion can create a large plant quickly if a large rootstock is chosen.

Cleft Grafting



Also, unwanted cultivars can be cut down, and grafted with a desirable one (or more).

The most important thing about grafting is the lining up of the cambium layer of the scion with the cambium layer of the rootstock.

The cambium layer is a thin green layer situated between the types of cell structures known botanically as xylem (heartwood) to the inside of the cambium, and the phloem tissue to the outside of the cambium (bark).

Saddle grafting is also suitable for a scion similar in size to the rootstock.

T budding is used when the sap is flowing.

The grafted plant should be kept in a shady location, and not kept too wet until the scion starts to grow, usually in Spring. Admit air and sunlight gradually.

If you would like to add any further hints, please email

editor@camelliansw.org

Whip and Tongue Grafting

