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Mid-Shires Orchard Group web-site: <http://www.msog.btik.com/>

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## **FIRST NATIONAL SCION WOOD EXCHANGE DAY – 7 - 8 FEBRUARY, 2009 (HOSTED AT BUCKINGHAM NURSERIES)**

**This event will probably be the first ever national UK scion-wood exchange and apple tree-grafting event, where members of the public will be able to obtain cuttings of over 100 varieties of rare and unusual apple varieties, free of charge, to graft into new apple trees. We will also be providing a subsidised grafting service so people can have trees made up on the spot to take home to promote home fruit growing.**

The event will also have demonstrations of the ancient art of grafting and pruning, displays, talks, work-shops, apple-juice and cider tasting and fun activities (including a new 'Schools Challenge' by Buckingham Nurseries), the sale of fruit related products, as well as a Potato event, which is part of the Buckingham Nurseries 'Potato Week', complete with experts to answer all potato queries.

The event was the idea of Mid-Shires Orchard Group Chairman and Co-founder, Marcus Roberts, to promote the preservation of rare apple varieties and to encourage home fruit growing and to introduce scion-wood swapping events from the USA to the UK. He also wants to create a new type of apple event in the UK, at a different time of the year to the usual Apple Days, which encourages fruit tree planting and home fruit storage.

The event has also been created with Andy Howard (the hard-working Co-founder of the Mid-Shires Orchard Group) as well as Pauline Brown of Buckingham Nurseries and Barry Smith, Head Gardener at Stowe Landscape Gardens. Buckingham Nurseries helps support the work of the MSOG and is kindly hosting the event as part of their work with the wider community and Stowe Landscape Gardens is the official 'home' of the MSOG and also supports the orchard group.

### **What's the Big Idea?**

This will be the first national scion-wood exchange in the UK as far as we are aware. Scion-wood exchanges are well established in the USA and are a great way of getting people into home fruit growing as well as conserving rare fruit trees and spreading vital skills and knowledge. We will be asking all of the major orchard groups to contribute scion wood for the event.

We think that every garden should have a fruit tree and every-one should be able to experience the pleasure of growing fruit at home and the fantastic flavour of heritage apples which is why we will be offering each family group a 'just-grafted' apple trees for less than cost price. Also, home fruit is a great way of reducing food miles and a simple way of thinking about being more local and ecological. Contrary to government policy being environmental should be fun and cheap.

We also think that the now ubiquitous 'Apple Days' are in danger of becoming a victim of their own success in that there is now glut of events in some areas. We think that the events should be spread across the winter and scion-wood exchanges offer many of the pleasures of an apple day, but with a new emphasis, not just on tasting and consumption of apples, but with planting of new trees in anticipation of the new growing year.

### **What will I find at the exchange?**

The covered plant sales areas will be converted to the hub of our scion-wood exchange, which will be filled with rows of tables piled high with large sealed and labeled bags of dormant cuttings from over 100 of different and delicious varieties of apple trees, with large labels describing the fruit and its history.

There will also be a grafting service if you want to save a treasured old tree in your garden or orchard.

There will be a festival atmosphere, with displays of long-keeping heritage apples, demonstrations of grafting, workshops on pruning and talks on aspects of fruit growing as well as free-advice and display by the Mid-Shires Orchard group and Buckingham Nursery. There will be cookery demonstrations, and food and refreshments will be available from our café. We will have specialist artisan cider producers with their cider and apple juice to sample and buy!

We will have a competition to guess the use of some very strange antique agricultural implements as a fund raiser for the MSOG.

We will have specialist fruit books available for consultation. We would encourage any-one with old books on fruit growing they no longer want, to bring them along to donate to the Mid Shires Orchard Group Library.

We will also have a display of heritage potatoes and our potatoes experts will be on hand to answer questions on all aspects of potatoes growing and heritage. Colin Randell from Thompson and Morgan will be with us all week-end as well as Bernard Stopps, a local expert on potato growing and also for showing. Colin and Bernard make a very good 'double act' and both seem to enjoy the week-end as much as the customers!

### **Who is the Exchange for?**

The exchange is for every-one, from those who want to enjoy the unique atmosphere of the day and might be thinking of growing their own fruit and perhaps getting younger members of the family interested to the fruit grower (or fanatic) who wants to find that something special for their orchard.

### **What you do at the exchange**

Participants will be encouraged to bring scion wood to the event, if they can, but you don't have to bring scion wood to join in!

Visitors will then be able to select scion wood to take home with them to graft, if they know how to do so, or we will also supply the root-stocks for grafting and growing the apple-scion wood and a team of expert grafters will be on hand to create you own individually crafted tree as you wait!

Visitors will be able to take one graft-stick from each apple variety, which will be sufficient for about 3 trees. We will ask visitors to only take what they are actually going to use to make sure that no-one is disappointed and we need to point out that the scion wood is only for personal not commercial use.

In order to encourage people to put a fruit trees into their garden, and experience the pleasure of fruit growing, the Mid-Shires orchard Group and Buckingham Nurseries, have created the amazing offer of grafting your own choice of apple, while you wait, on to any stock for only less than cost price! This limited to one tree per family, family group, but other 'just grafted' trees will be available at c. £6 per tree if you want more than one tree. We may need to limit the 'while you wait' service if there is a very high demand on the day and to graft any additional trees soon after the event for collection.

There will also be a large selection of containerized and bare-rooted fruit-trees and soft fruit bushes for sale on the day, with additional special offers, from the wide stock of high-quality trees on sale at Buckingham Nursery.

### **What is grafting?**

Grafting is the process by which a fruit trees are propagated. In grafting you join a short piece of fruit wood, of the variety you want to grow, to a root-stock which will provide the roots and part of the stem of the new apple tree. Grafting is done because apples do not grow true from seed and you can only keep a fruit variety going by this simple method of cloning. This ancient craft skill is not too difficult to learn though it can take quite a lot of practice to perfect. There will be grafting demonstrations of the art and you will be able to watch our expert grafters in action as well. A follow-up grafting workshop will be held soon after by the Mid-Shires Orchard Group for those who want one to one instruction and practice.

### **What about Food and Refreshments?**

There is a café-restaurant at Buckingham Garden Centre with a good selection of food, drinks and meals and there are toilets and changing facilities available too.

### **What to Bring**

- 1) Scion wood of named apple varieties (you must be confident that you know what it is),
- 2) Or, wood of interesting seedlings or ancient apple trees, which you do not know the name of, as long as you feel that it would be great to share or conserve, and you can give a detailed description of the tree and its fruit and its story. (See below for more about preparing material for the exchange.)
- 3) Empty plastic bags, masking tape or labels, and a waterproof pen (or pencil) -- to bag and label the things you want to take home from the exchange. (we will be able to provide some labels)
- 4) Seed, gardening books and catalogs, tools, and other gardening-related items you don't need anymore but someone else would enjoy.
- 5) **DO NOT BRING ANY MATERIAL THAT MAY BE DISEASED, OR MAY BE CARRYING PESTS, OR PARACITES, AND KEEP ALL MATERIAL SEALED IN PLASTIC BAGS. ZIP-LOCK BAGS ARE RECOMMENED FOR THIS PURPOSE**

#### **Tips on Cutting & Storing Scions: (Hints for Everyone)**

Scion wood needs to be gathered by participants while it is still dormant, probably early January to early February. After that time, when the buds become active and start to push

open, it is no longer suitable for grafting. Due to this, it is imperative that proper storage methods be used to keep the scion wood fresh and dormant. In this way, the wood can be stored for many weeks and still grafted successfully. Wood should come from clean, disease-free and non-patented trees. Select straight wood from last year's growth and cut as near to our scion wood exchange date as possible. Wood should be 1/4" – 3/8" diameter (pencil size) and contain several buds.

Cut to lengths that fit easily into a zip-lock-type bag (about 8" – 10"). Cut with a slanting cut on the top (distal) end and flat cut on the end that would have been nearest the trunk (medial). Bundle by variety in a moist paper towel(s) and place in a zip-lock type bag, leaving a slight opening in the zip-lock bag for the wood to breathe, or you can dip both ends of each piece in melted paraffin. . Make sure that the towel(s) stay damp as long as the wood is stored. Longer bundles of graft wood can also be plunged into compost in a large tub or container in a well-shaded and cool place next to a wall or a shed. Label outside of bag with fruit type and variety, as well as any additional information you feel is pertinent (pollinator; vigor; fruit description, history, where successfully grown, etc., the more information the better). Keep scion wood bag in vegetable draw of your refrigerator until the morning of the exchange. Be careful not to let the scion wood freeze!

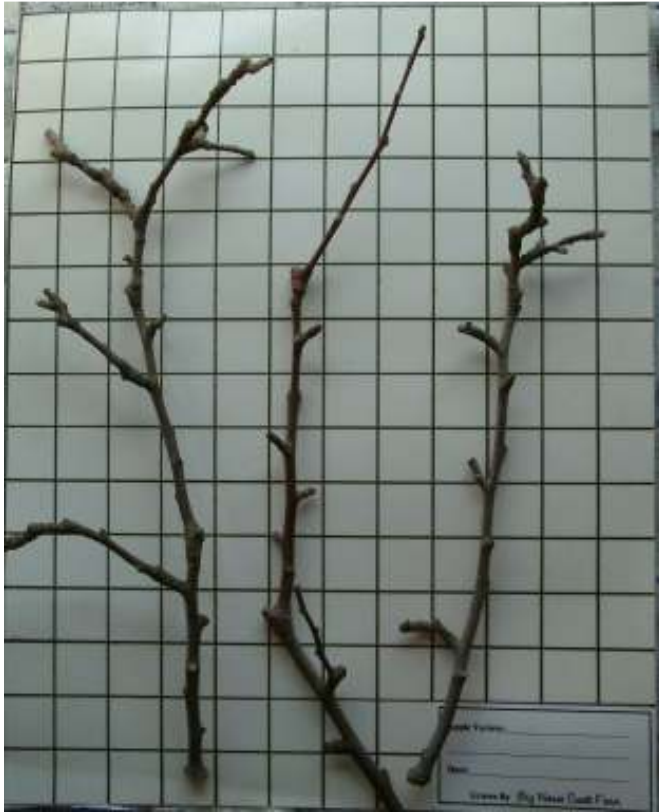
### **Collecting Scion Wood from Old Trees**

It is *always* easiest to collect scion wood from young trees or trees which have always been regularly pruned. However, if you need to get graft wood from a very old tree (particularly if it is the last of its kind and you want to save it) you will need to take what you can get, usually short sections from branches high-up in the sun-light, or from the vertical water-shoots that can grow up from the trunk. It is possible to graft using two year old wood at a pinch, but it definitely carpentry!

### **Example of Good Scion Wood**



## Example of Bad Scion Wood



### NOTES

#### **The Mid-Shires Orchard Group**

For further information on the MSOG please refer to our web-site:

<http://www.msog.btik.com/>

#### **Start Times**

The apple event will take place over the whole week-end during the opening hours of the garden centre. However, on Saturday, the first day, the event will not open until the set-up of the scion wood has been completed, which will be around 10 am – but for further details check the web-sites closer to the event.

#### **Directions to Event**

Buckingham Nurseries address: Buckingham Nurseries and Garden Centre, Tingewick Road, Buckingham, MK18 4AE. For further details of how to get to the event, please refer to the Buckingham Nursery web-site [www.hedging.co.uk](http://www.hedging.co.uk) or for a map, go direct to <http://www.buckingham-nurseries.co.uk/map.html>. The garden centre is situated on the A421 on the south-west edge of Buckingham.