



Cherry Grafting

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Rick Gush

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Photo by Rick Gush I was at my friend Richard's house this week when his neighbor came over and grafted another one of Richard's old cherry trees. Richard fired up his chain saw and cut the top of the tree, leaving a couple of waist-high stumps.

In the meantime, Franco the grafter went to another neighbor's house and got scions from a sweet cherry tree that produces great fruit.

Franco cut three inch long, quarter-inch wide notches in the top edges of the stumps and then carved the bottoms of the scion pieces into an odd triangle form, with two edges of the scion cut fresh, and the third part of the stem left as is.

The fresh cut sides were then shoved inside one of the notches cut in the top of the stump, leaving the uncut part of the scion with bark intact positioned toward the outside. Once all the scions were in place he wrapped electricians tape around the top edge of the stump, in such a manner as to hold the scions firmly in place. He also had a bit of grafting wax that he daubed on the top part of the joints.

Photo by Rick Gush I was surprised that instead of a fancy grafting knife, of which there are a lot on the market here, Franco used a big Opinel folding knife. He says the steel is good and the knife can be made razor sharp.

Hmm, I own that same Opinel knife, but mine is far from being a razor. I usually use it to cut cheese and apples when I picnic with my wife. I'll have to see if I can get it razor sharp one of these days, perhaps before I do my own grafting on the fig tree this June.

There are a lot of old cherry trees in Liguria, and it seems this fruit tree was a longtime favorite of the local small farmers. While hiking around in the hills here I've seen quite a lot of old cheery trees that have been cut back to stumps and re-grafted with new scions.

There are also a lot of wild sour cherries that grow around here, called "Amarena" or "sour one." I am a Ligurian gardener, and so I myself planted one sweet and one sour cherry this year. I'm crazy about fresh cherry juice, and a mix between sweet and sour cherry juice is pretty close to paradise. I also always order Amarena flavor ice cream cones in the summer.

Richard's problem was that he had a few mature trees that were supposed to be sweet, but produced only mediocre fruit. The prognosis for the grafts is pretty good, not only because Franco performed a similar, successful, grafting on one of Richard's other trees last year.

Today's second photo shows last year's tree, and the good growth of the grafted sections is obvious. I think they may even get a few fruit from the one-year-old grafted sections this season.

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