Annonas or custard apples

The Annona family includes the cherimoya (Annona cherimola), the sweetsop (A. squamosa), the soursop (A. muricata), the custard apple or bullock's heart (4. reticulata), and the atemoya (A. squamosa x cherimola), which is the custard apple sold in Australia. For all these species, grafting is the preferred propagation technique. Graft either in spring with grey-green mature wood of the previous's season growth or green graft during the growing season. With both techniques, use vigorous seedlings as rootstocks.

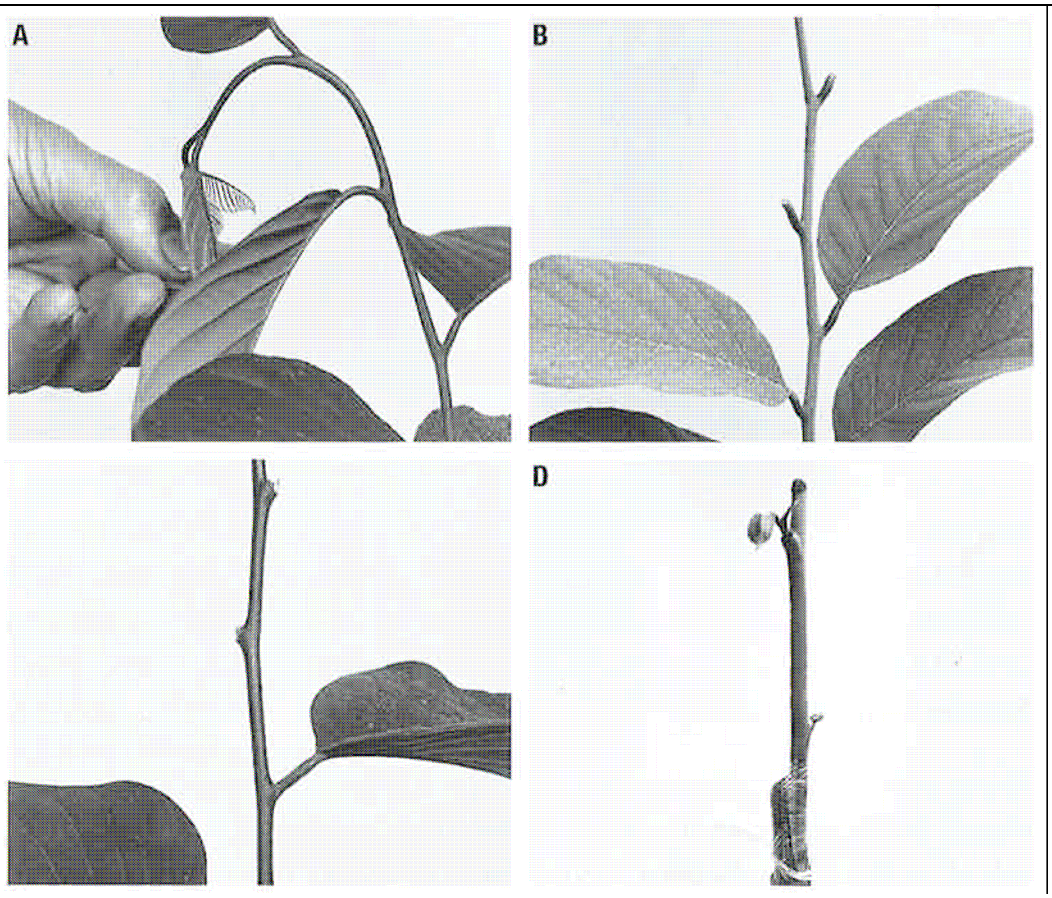

Figure 29, Green grafting of Annona. A) Selection of scion wood - the portion of stem below the bend is used. B) Preparation of graft wood - shoot tip and leaf blades of terminal leaves are removed. C) When the petioles fall, the graft wood is ready to use. D) Scion growth approximately three weeks after grafting by the bark graft technique.

Annona buds develop right inside the hollow petioles, so take care when collecting scion wood and clipping off the leaves. To avoid damaging the buds, retain at least 5 mm of each petiole base.

As annona shoots mature, the bark colour changes from green, to grey-green, to light brown. Grey-green scion wood is best for splice grafting onto one-year-old rootstocks as it matches well to rootstock shoots of a similar age.

Seedling rootstocks three to six months old can be green grafted, using scion wood from young, green shoots of the current season's growth, prepared as previously described (see Figure 29). Graft the rootstock anywhere below the soft shoot tip where the scion and rootstock diameters are about the same, using a whip and tongue or a splice graft.

Older, larger rootstocks can be bark grafted (Figure 29D).

Bud burst of the scion is rapid and may be as soon as two weeks after grafting.

The green grafting technique can be used for a range of other species including jujube (Ziziphus jujuba), persimmon (Diospyros kaki), longan (Euphoria longan) and casimiroa (Casimiroa edulis).