

An Alternative Method of Budding *Fraxinus angustifolia* 'Raywood' (Claret Ash)

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UNDERSTOCK

The understock that I use is a cross between *Fraxinus americana* and *F. oxycarpa*. It was first introduced to the trade by Hazlewood Nursery, many years ago, for its superior root system and its ability to grow from hardwood cuttings. I obtained my original cuttings from an old tree in an old nursery at Mt. Irvine in the Blue Mountains of NSW. I wasn't sure of its species so I asked John Teulon to identify it. He had known about this tree for years but as this tree had died and he did not know of any others, he had assumed that it was no longer available in Australia.

My stockplants of this tree are now 7 years old and get pruned back to approximately 90 cm each winter. In spring, the many new water shoots grow rapidly to 1.2 to 1.8 m in length. They have a high percentage of inter nodal length of 200 mm or more.

BUDDING

Budding is done onto the stockplant in mid to late March (early autumn), after the branches have grown sufficiently but before the sap stops flowing.

I generally use a T- bud however last year I did a chip bud as the sap had stopped flowing. The success rates of both methods of budding are the same (very good).

The bud is positioned approximately 180 mm above each node along the length of the cane. This gives between 4 and 8 buds per cane. The beauty of budding like this is that I can stand beside the tree, mostly with my back straight, not kneeling on the ground with a bent back. When they are tied, I like to leave the bud exposed. They are then left until August (late winter).

CUTTINGS

In August, the canes are collected from the stock bed and taken to the shed for processing. The cuttings are made with a node at the bottom and the inserted claret ash bud at the top. The pair of bottom buds at the node are removed very deeply so there are no understock buds on the cutting and then treated with IBA at 8000 ppm.

PLANTING AND GROWING

The cuttings are planted in one of our standard hardwood cutting bed. This is 30 cm high by 90 cm wide and 40 m long. It is compost-enriched soil topped with strawberry mulch plastic (only 25 µM) which the cuttings are inserted straight through. They are planted on a 10-cm diagonal pattern and watered via a T-tape system and/or overhead sprinklers. All buds are faced to the south, as this reduces the incidence of "hockey-stick" trunks.

They start to shoot away at the end of September. At this stage the ties are removed. The plants generally grow nice and straight and rapidly throughout the year and reach between 1.2 and 1.6 m high.

DIGGING

We start digging in early July. We can not start earlier as most of our plants are 1 year old and have an in-built juvenility factor, so they tend to hang onto their leaves longer into winter.

We have a cable drawn digger which undercuts the plant and loosens the soil from the roots. They are then taken to the shed for grading and placing into orders. All our plants are dispatched free of soil to all parts of Australia.

REASONS FOR SUCCESS

- 1) Suckering is not a problem, on juvenile or mature trees, with this method.
- 2) Growth rates are very similar when using a clonal understock, not seedlings.
- 3) Budding is done at a time of year when there is less work to do in our nursery. Grafting is done in winter when we are busy. We have previously done claret ash by root grafting in winter.
- 4) It is cheaper to stick a hardwood cutting in the ground than to plant a 1-year-old seedling.
- 5) As the budding is done standing up, there are no sore backs from grovelling in the dirt.
- 6) Fits in well with our production as it is growing in the ground for 1 year.
- 7) Any member of staff can make up the cuttings.
- 8) Plants present well as all buds are 180 mm above root development.