

ASK THE LANDSCAPE PROFESSIONAL

Welcome

To my Weekly Series

Feel free to send me questions you'd like to have me answer and I will do my best to address the ones of most general interest. Email or mail your questions to:

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Question of the Week:

Hi Linda, I always enjoy your informative articles. I have a question for you. I start my garden vegetables in my cellar under florescent lights. I like to grow a lot of variety, like I grow only 6 tomatoes plants, but 3-4 varieties. This year I thought I'd make a change, rather starting them all by seeds, I would buy the plants where I only want 1 or 2 plants.

As I look in seed catalogs, I see they offer transplants for about \$5.00 each and grafted plants for about \$10.00 each. What is the advantage of grafted transplants? Thank you...Al



Linda's Answer:

Hi Al,

Believe it or not, the idea of attaching the top of one plant to the bottom of another (called grafting) has been around for centuries. For many years, we have seen weeping cherry trees, which are the result of grafting, but it's been only in the last ten years or so that grafted vegetables have started to become available. Grafting research underway today is directed primarily at watermelons and tomatoes, but you can also find cantaloupes, cucumbers and eggplants and other vegetables available. The primary advantage of grafting is that the rootstock used is resistant to soil borne diseases. Also, grafted plants can produce more fruit and be heartier by tolerating hotter or colder climates. The top part of the plant (scion) that bears the desirable fruit is grafted to rootstock from another plant that is resistant to soil borne disease. Ultimately, this technique saves time in creating a disease resistant plant, but since it requires more labor and materials to develop the grafted plant, the cost is higher, like you pointed out. There is a caution to keep in mind when planting grafted plants. For example, normally, non-grafted tomatoes are planted deeply to encourage more root development, but the grafted joint of a grafted tomato, must be kept above the soil, otherwise the scion will start sending down roots and defeat the purpose of a grafted plant.

Good luck and thank you for an interesting question.