

# RealEstate

## Green house Graft to speed up growth Maj Gen C.S. Bewli

Cactus seedlings on their own roots normally take five to six years to form mature plants. To speed up the growth, the seedlings when grafted on pereskopsis take about three years for maturity. Unlike other cacti, pereskopsis is a fast growing cactus having leaves.



In this case pereskopsis is stock and the seedling to be placed on top of the stock is scion. The pereskopsis plant should be about 10 cm in height. Remove all the leaves except two three at the base for better photosynthesis. Slice the pereskopsis 1-2 cm from the top with a razor blade, ensuring that the cut is even.

Take a clean seedling and slice it roughly into half, again ensuring that the cut is even and the required portion of the seedling remains on the blade.

### Pereskopsis grafting

Place the seedling scion with the tweezers on top of the stock ensuring that the vascular bundles of both are superimposed as nearly as possible. Put a little pressure with the finger and count up to ten to ensure that no air is left under the scion and contact is good.

Shift the grafted plant to a high humidity area for about a week's time and then gradually shift to sunlight.

Transplantation of cacti

Correct potting of the plants is as important as the preparation of soil mix. All other efforts to grow the plant will be futile if potting is not done correctly. Most of the cacti and succulents grow quite slowly and need less frequent repotting unlike the foliage plants.

The best time to transplant is undoubtedly the spring, when the cacti is about to start growth again.

## **Steps for transplanting**

- The plant should be watered one day before it is to be repotted, so that the soil mix is just damp and not soggy.
- Invert the plant with the pot and hold the plant firmly with a newspaper to avoid thorns with one hand and tap the edge of the pot on any flat raised surface with the other hand. The plant will come out of its pot with a root ball intact and without damage to the roots.
- Remove the crocks from the base of the root and untangle them gently.
- For potting, place a concave crock in the pot with the concavity facing downward so that the hole of the pot is covered and not plugged. Add 2 cm layer of grit and fill one third of the pot with the moist cactus compost. Hold the plant with one hand and the roots are evenly spread away from the middle of the pot. Take a scoop of moist cactus compost with the other hand and pour in gradually all around the plant leaving a centimetre of top space free.

## **Tap the pot gently**

- The compost must not be compacted with hands as this will damage the roots. Finally about 2 cm of space should be left out between the compost level and top of the rim for the purpose of watering.
- Place the freshly potted plant in a partially shaded and airy place. The plant should not be watered for 4-5 days to allow healing of any damage caused to the roots. For first watering soak the entire pot in Bavistin solution (2 grams per litre of water) and further watering should only be done when the top soil is dry.
- After a week of potting, gradually shift the plant to a more sunny and airy location.

### **Cactus and succulent rockery**

A rockery full of cactus and other succulent plants can be created within your own garden. Most of these plants are xerophytes and need a sunny location, relatively lesser care and infrequent watering. In a small area a large collection can be maintained. (See pic)

In some books cacti are described as desert plants, which is far from truth and synonymous to this description, it may be apt to assume that Rockery is an area where these plants are landscaped and grown.

## **Light and aeration**

Ideally, hardy cacti should be grown in full sun for good growth and healthy flowers. If it is not possible to get enough sunlight, the natural light should be supplemented by fluorescent lighting source to avoid etiolation on plants. For not so hardy or softer species, filtered sunlight is required to avoid sunburns. The place where plants are kept should also have good amount of ventilation for their balanced growth.

## **Why go for grafting**

- To accelerate the growth rate of slow growing species.
- To ensure survival of difficult to grow plants with weak root systems.
- For healthy growth of variegated and brightly coloured plants.
- For cristates and monstrose to remain healthy.
- It's a handy tool in the hands of conservationists in saving the endangered species.
- To accelerate the growth of plant for commercial use.
- To save some severely rotted or diseased plants.