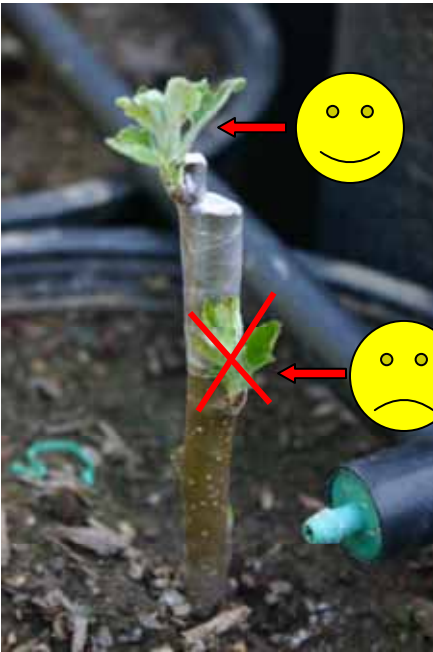




Benchgraft Planting Instructions- Kuffel Creek Apple Nursery “Apple Trees for Hot Climates and the Tropics”

You have a Benchgraft, an infant apple tree. A cutting from your selected apple variety (scion) has been grafted onto a rootstock that is especially suited for a hot climate, as it is tough, adaptable to a variety of poor soils, and induces early bearing. If you cannot plant immediately, put the trees in the refrigerator; they will keep a few weeks.

Dig a large hole, large enough so that the roots do not curl in the hole (they will never straighten out and will eventually strangle themselves otherwise). Digging a large, wide hole is the best thing you can do to give your young tree a good start, as you are loosening the dirt so the roots can easily penetrate and thrive.



Let the top sprout grow straight up, and rub off any sprouts that come from below the graft union (where the tape is). Slit the graft wrapping in about a month. Train the top sprout to a stick to make it grow straight up.

Train the top sprout (leader) along a stick, making sure the ties don't girdle the rapidly expanding trunk. It will probably grow straight up the first year; you want it to grow as tall as possible the first year. The next year it will sprout branches, and possibly fruit. As side branches start to form, clip a wooden clothespin right above them to force the tender branch horizontally to form a wide branch angle. **Paint the trunk white with latex paint diluted 50% with water to avoid sunburn and prevent borers.** Do not fertilize your apple tree other than the mulch you put around the base. Do not prune very much the first couple years or this will delay fruiting. For more information on growing apples in a warm climate, see www.kuffelcreek.com/applenursery.htm

Plant the benchgraft deep in order to avoid aerial burr knots (where roots try to form on the trunk above ground, resulting in knobby “galls”). The graft union should be within an inch or two of the ground.

Do not mix any amendments in with the dirt such as manure or compost. Doing so will void your warranty. Backfill the hole with the dirt you took out of the hole, compacting the dirt firmly as you backfill.

Form a dish around the tree so it will hold water, and fill up the dish. Allow the water to soak in, they fill it again. After it soaks in, fill the dish with a thick (3-4”) layer of mulch such as bark or shredder chips from the arborist. This mulch will decompose over time, and the tree will send feeder roots up into it to feed, which is all the fertilizing it needs. Keep the mulch back from the trunk a bit to avoid collar rot. Do not water it again until it starts to push leaves out; keeping the ground soaked on a dormant benchgraft will rot the roots and it will sprout a bit and then die.

Once it starts growing vigorously, deep-soak the tree once a week, twice (or more) a week in the summer (a drip system is ideal). Once it sprouts, let the top sprout grow straight up. Any sprouts below it should be pinched off at five leaves. Rub off any sprouts below the graft union that are emanating from the rootstock.

Your benchgraft is wrapped with two kinds of tape. The scion (little stick on the end) is wrapped in parafilm (a wax tape) in order to keep it from drying out. The scion will bud right through the parafilm and nothing else needs to be done with it. **The graft union is wrapped with a tougher vinyl tape. You should slit this with a razor knife in May to keep it from girdling the rapidly expanding tree.**

