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Grafted Tomatoes

by William McClenathan

I am a cynic at heart. And when someone tells me about something new... I can't help but question it. After all, I do not want to be like the Emperor from the Emperor's New Clothes and be caught walking naked down the boulevard! Had anyone but Alice Doyle, from Loghouse Plants, introduced me to this new plant idea, I would have had total disdain for the concept... truth is... I did anyway! But after my initial shock, I began to do some research into the idea.

Grafting one plant on to another has been around for centuries. However, this concept has only been applied to growing vegetables for about the last hundred years. In many parts of Europe and Asia they have been doing this for quite some time, in both retail and farming arenas.

The idea behind this concept of growing is to take a vegetable start and graft it onto a root source that is better equipped to deal with soil and disease issues better than the starts own root system. In the Northwest, we have a plethora of things that can inhibit good crop production in veggies. In this practice, many of these problems are eradicated, or at least greatly lessened through the grafting of different plant parts. And after all... who am I to question a hundred years of research and trial?

So I began to look into the reasons that these new grafted vegetables might be worth the higher prices. What I found were the very real results that they do better, produce more, and have a healthier life. From my understanding, salt in the soil is a big problem for many growers of tomatoes. Although this is not a huge problem in the Northwest, we do have 'blossom end rot,' nematodes (small 'worms' that feed on the roots of plants), and other diseases which effect tomato production negatively. Grafted tomatoes promise to alleviate this concern. With the combination of plants that handle the soil born diseases best, yet, produce less than pleasing crops, and the plants that have bountiful crops of plump tomatoes, you get the best of both worlds in your garden! After all, healthy roots will always produce a more bountiful crop.

From my understanding as well, these grafted tomatoes are great because you can replant each year in the same soil. This is an advantage to the greenhouse and field growers that commercially grow tomatoes and to areas in the world that have depleted soil nutrition.

I'm always willing to try something new. So, this year I will test my hand at growing these grafted tomatoes of-

Grafted Tomatoes *...continued*

fered by Alice Doyle from Loghouse Plants and available for your own purchase at Portland Nursery. Even though I have had great luck in my own vegetable garden with tomatoes, I will trust the plant knowledge of my good friend Alice and ignore my skepticism. Why not give it a shot, especially when the payout could be so great? Plus, here at Garden Time, we are always trying to bring you the most current and unique plants available for your gardens and for your enjoyment!