

The Use of Velcro Strips for Rooting

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My talk today will be a tale of a trial rather than a propagation tip that can be taken out the door. I will discuss the use of velcro strips with IBA applied to mature trees in the landscape as an aid in the rooting of these difficult species.

As the propagator at an arboretum, I am often faced with the difficult task of propagating rare specimens. Some may have been originally grafted while others fit into the category of being difficult to propagate because of maturity, stress or poor health. Two such plants that I am working on are *Magnolia scheideana*, a native of Mexico and *Quercus robur* 'Concordia', a yellow-green cultivar aptly named the golden oak.

Banding, a method of etiolation using velcro strips to exclude light with added IBA talc, was attempted on mature trees in the Arboretum in the summer of 1992. Weather conditions earlier this year during the so-called non-summer of 1993 were so cool and wet that trials were not repeated. Gathering information from a couple of sources, namely Nina Bassuk at Cornell University, who has done extensive work on banding of oaks, as well as some discussion with folks down at the University of California, Davis Arboretum, who were experimenting with similar trials on oaks there, I decided to attempt this procedure. The primary difference being attempts on mature trees in the landscape, where all sorts of conditions exist. Supplies consisted of latex throw-away gloves, IBA talc, Hormex No. 3 in a sealed plastic bag, velcro pieces cut to approximately 1 in. x 1 in. Strips were applied to branches lower on the trees, both in full sun as well as in full shade. They were to remain for a period of 8 weeks time, managing wind, rain, and other unexpected disturbances. At the end of this time period, semi-hardwood cuttings were made by cutting the stems just below the velcro strips. The results were very apparent wounding, with calloused knobs existing on some stems of the *Magnolia* created by the tight velcro strips placed on the growing plants embedded by the velcro nubs. These cuttings were then stuck in a pure pumice medium under mist. Three of the *Magnolia* cuttings rooted, with only one living past the winter months. None of the oak cuttings rooted. Cuttings of stems not wounded by the velcro were attempted as well, but none rooted. Results are sparse, but further trials are to be attempted next year, with the hope of further success.