GRAFTING THE PAPAW

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The method of grafting the Papaya is so simple that it seems remarkable that it was not discovered earlier. The difficulty evidently lay in the fact that a bearing papaya tree under ordinary circumstances has no bud wood for grafting purposes. After a seedling begins to fruit, it does not normally produce side shoots which can be used for grafting. It has been observed for some time, h owever, that if the top of a bearing tree is cut or broken off accidentally, a large number of shoots begin to form, one from the upper part of each leaf scar, that is the axil of the leaf. This takes place three or four weeks after the tree is decapitated. It is these small shoots, of which as many as fifty or more may be produced by a single tree, that are used in grafting the papaya. One of the shoots is taken when a few inches long and about the diameter of a lead pencil is sharpened to a wedge point, the leaf surface reduced, and inserted in a cleft in a young seedling papaya plant which has been decapitated when 6 to 10 inches high, and split with an unusually sharp, thin grafting knife. At this age the trunk of the young seedling has not yet formed the hollow space in the centre. It is not necessary for the stock and the scion to be of equal size; the scion should not, however, be larger than the stock. After inserting the scion, the stock is tied firmly, but not tightly, with a short piece of soft twine. The grafted plant should be shaded for a few days after the grafting has been done, and the twine should be removed on the sixth or seventh day. The best success has been secured in these experiments by grafting potted seedlings in the greenhouse or under the shade of a lath house, presumably because the stock can be kept in good growing condition under these circumstances. Under these conditions 75 per cent, of success can be expected. In the field, also, this method has been successfully followed - QUEENSLAND AGRICULTURAL JOURNAL.