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Advanced Wiring Techniques

In the last issue we covered basic wiring techniques. In this issue we cover an advanced technique used for bending thicker branches. Thick, older branches are not as flexible as the thin new shoots. If one simply wraps copious amounts of wire around such a branch and tried to bend it, it would probably snap.

One must first reduce the amount of ? stiffness? in the branch by splitting it lengthwise throughout the area to be bent. A special tool, a branch splitter, is used for this purpose. A single split will reduce the stiffness by half. A second split at right angles to the first will quarter the branch and also quarter the amount of rigidity.

To protect this split section from the elements, bugs and unwanted shoot growth moist raffia is wrapped around the branch like a bandage. Several wraps of the raffia are required. This cushion of raffia also protects the bark of the damaged area from cutting into the wire that will now be wrapped around it.

Raffia is the preferred material for this purpose as it is porous, allowing the tree to breath through it, and it will rot and degrade over time, leaving behind just the bare wire and the repaired branch.

After the raffia bandage has been applied, the wire must be applied. Because you are working with a thick branch it is mostly likely that you will need more than just one wrap of wire to hold the bend, no matter how thick the wire you use is. Attempt to wrap the additional wraps in neat parallel coils. Avoid crossovers as much as possible, but also be aware that with the raffia acting as a bandage the tree probably will not get bad wire cuts so neatness is not a major priority.

You may need to leave the wire on for an additional growing season before the thick branch retains its bent position.

Also be aware that the branch will thicken quicker in the bent area as a result of the splitting and bending process.

Till next issue, enjoy getting wired.