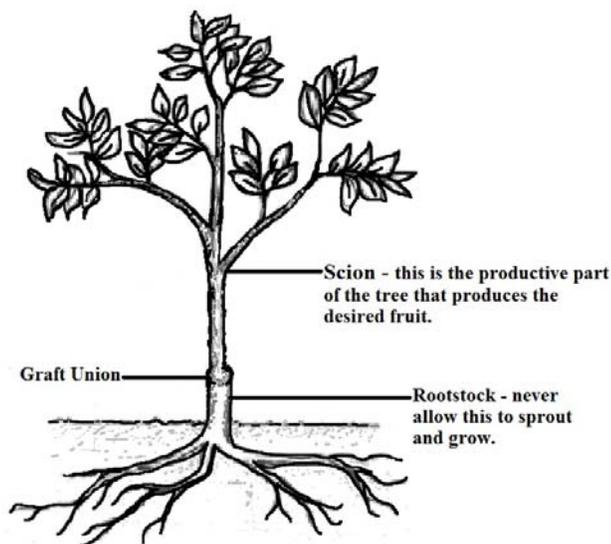


# CITRUS PROBLEMS – SPROUTING ROOTSTOCK

The citrus trees you purchase at the nursery have all been grafted. That is, a desirable, named citrus variety, such as Owari satsuma or Meyer lemon, is grafted onto a rootstock that is a completely different type of citrus. Trifoliata orange (also called sour orange) is often used as the rootstock.

The point where the graft was made (called the graft union) will generally appear as a swollen point or crook in the lower part of a trunk. When you purchase a young citrus tree, look for and find the graft union. Everything above the graft union is the desirable citrus tree – the satsuma, lemon, kumquat, orange or grapefruit – called the scion. Everything below the graft union is something else entirely – either trifoliata orange (*Poncirus trifoliata* Rubidoux) or Swingle citrumello – called the rootstock.



The purpose of the rootstock is to provide a strong, vigorous root system that will produce a robust growing, productive tree. The advantage of the trifoliata root stock is that it also imparts increased cold hardiness to the upper part of the tree

Once you have located the graft union on the trunk, you must never allow any shoots to sprout and grow from below the graft union. These shoots are called “suckers.” If you let these vigorous suckers grow, you are allowing something that is not your desirable citrus variety to grow. When a citrus tree produces atypical fruit, it generally means the rootstock has been allowed to sprout and grow. The trifoliata rootstock produces poor quality, seedy, sour, round yellow fruit. The Swingle produces a large fruit with thick skin. The growth from the rootstock often has different shaped leaves from your citrus and is thornier (although, many desirable citrus do produce thorns).

All you can do to correct this is to prune or saw off all of the suckers growing from below the graft union back to the trunk. Allowed to go on for too long, the sucker growth from the rootstock can take over the tree and crowd out the desirable citrus until there is none left. Don't let this happen.

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