



YELLOWSTONE NATURE NOTES

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NATURAL GRAFT

by Ranger Naturalist George Marler



While squirrels serve a very useful function in aiding reforestation, yet it is unquestionably rare that their seed scattering and gathering activities result,

in natural tree graft. Along the nature trail at Old Faithful is found this unique and interesting occurrence.

Under the forked root of a large Lodgepole pine (*Pinus contorta*), the seed of a Whitebark pine (*Pinus albicaulis*) has germinated and pushed itself out in an angular direction in search of the light. After merging into the sunlight, another force (geotropic) has changed its direction of growth in natural alignment with gravity. As the Whitebark grow from year to year increasing pressure between it and its large neighbor, with consequent irritations and lessions resulting from trunk movement brought about by the winds, a complete fusion of the woody material of both trees took place.