

TAMPA BAY CHAPTER, RFCI

TAMPA BAY CHAPTER, RARE FRUIT COUNCIL INTERNATIONAL, Inc.

NEXT MEETING.....SUNDAY, JANUARY 4, 1981 @ 2:00 PM

MEETING PLACE.....NORTH TAMPA COUNTRY HOME OF
JOE & JANE CONSTANTINE
ON LAKE LECLARE ROAD

GUEST SPEAKER.....Dr. Robert J. Knight, Jr.
Research Horticulturist
Subtropical Hort. Research Unit
U.S.D.A. Station, Miami
and Past President (1965),
Miami RFC

TOPIC.....Research on Tropical and Subtropical
Fruits at the Miami USDA Station with
Emphasis on Cold Hardiness Adaption

PLANT EXCHANGE & AUCTION FOLLOWING MEETING -- Please Bring
Your Plants and NOTIFY Bob Heath before 2:00

EDITOR'S MESSAGE

Season's Greetings to all, especially to our many new members. Our membership growth has been phenomenal this second year of our existence as a chapter. This is largely due to the very successful booth at the Florida State Fair (which is coming up again very soon) and to the fantastic "First Annual Plant Sale" in October. I am sure that we are far exceeding the rate of growth experienced by Miami and Palm Beach before us. Now that we are passing the 100 mark in membership, a regular newsletter becomes a necessity. It helps to hold present members and to attract new members.

Actually this is not Volume I, No.1, since between Dec. 1978 and April 1979 our first secretary, Nancy Lester, published a monthly report on each meeting and announced the upcoming program.

Our newsletter should serve as a permanent record of information gathered from all available sources: our monthly programs, contributions by you the member, and material from other publications. All pertinent chapter news and announcements should be directed to the editor at the return address shown on the newsletter. If members want recipes printed, please voice your opinion. Other chapter newsletters seem to have drifted away from including them, however. If you have fruit plants you want to buy, sell, or trade, we may have space for inclusion of such "ads". Anyway, don't be bashful.

Because of the high interest in plant propagation and especially in grafting and budding, I shall include some material on the subject next month. We need someone to replace Jim Mercer as our resident expert on the subject, unless he can be prevailed upon to visit us from north Florida and give another class soon.

Report of December 7, 1980 Meeting

President Joe Constantine opened the meeting at 2:00 PM. He announced that we acquired 23 new memberships in November following the Plant Sale. In addition he welcomed the 4 more members who signed up prior to the meeting plus several guests and potential members.

We were advised that Christine Prodanas was seriously ill and in the hospital in Gainesville awaiting surgery. Her address, for those wishing to send her a card is: 23 Salisbury Dr., Holiday 33590.

The treasury report on the First Annual Plant Sale is still incomplete and follow-up sales continue. Unofficial results are: Day-of-the-Sale Gross - \$9500, Follow-up Sales Gross - \$2500, for a total of \$12,000 (approximate). Our net shall be near \$3500. We learned a great deal that can be applied to the next sale. The credit for the success of the sale goes mainly to Joe Constantine for first, imagining that we could bring off such a large scale venture, and then organizing and directing it. Also the fantastic job done by Paul and Irene Rubenstein in arranging the site and many details involved in running the sale plus the unreal feat of obtaining 13 TV interviews and free publicity in every major central Florida newspaper.

Program Chairman, Ray Thorndike, introduced the guest speaker from Lakeland, Professor Thomas B. Mack, Director of the Florida Southern College Citrus Institute. Among his other credits Prof. Mack authors a weekly garden column in the Lakeland Ledger. He very kindly gave us some excellent publicity in this column just before the sale.

"Unusual Citrus Fruits"
by Thomas B. Mack

Prior to the meeting, Prof. Mack laid out a beautiful display of citrus on the counter representing most of the major groups of fruits. Following the program, members were invited to sample them.

Prof. Mack traced the history of citrus culture from Southeast Asia to the Mediterranean basin and thence to the southern U.S.A. This history covers more than 2500 years. The citron (Citrus medica) is the earliest mentioned citrus in Greek writings, extolled as an ornamental. The sour or Seville orange (C. aurantium) was apparently the second citrus species to arrive in the Mediterranean area, brought there by the Arabs probably soon after 1000 A.D.

Cultivated in the Americas since Columbus' second voyage in 1493, the first citrus in Florida was planted about 1565 when St. Augustine was founded. Early large plantings in Florida were much farther north than today. Successive severe freeze years have resulted in a progressive march to the south by the citrus industry. Even now, much new acreage is being planted near Lake Okeechobee.

The commercial importance of the citrus industry to the state of Florida can be grasped by the figure of one billion dollars being the amount of business in 1978. Polk County alone grows more citrus than the whole state of California.

Japan is the second largest grower of citrus in the world, after the U.S. Brazil is coming on strong and promises to exceed Florida sometime in the future.

Crosses are possible between most species in the 33 genera of the Rutaceae family grown in Florida. One could say that there are too many different types and kinds of citrus grown in Florida: at least 250 varieties. There are more than 200 on the Florida Southern campus in Lakeland. There are 35 to 40 varieties of orange grown commercially.

Some of the types and varieties discussed and displayed for us were as follows:

Poncirus trifoliata : A thorny, deciduous (!), hedge plant (excellent for a fence line) used mainly as a rootstock. The fruits are not useful.

Fortunella spp., Kumquat: A cold hardy (compared to citrus) citrus relative which tolerates even more cold when on Poncirus roots.

F. japonica - the round varieties, Meiwa and Marumi

F. margarita - the oval variety, Nagami.

Citrus medica, the Citron : Mentioned earlier as the first citrus in the Old World, it is rarely found in Florida except as a specimen tree. It is still grown commercially in Italy and to a smaller extent in California. The pulp and juice are useless, but the thick rind is fermented in brine and then candied for use in fruitcakes, etc.

C. paradisi, Grapefruit : Apparently a mutant of the huge pummelo or shaddock (C. grandis), occurring in the Caribbean over 200 years ago. The oldest variety planted commercially is the Duncan, originating in Safety Harbor, not far from our meeting site. It is the standard of quality in grapefruit and probably the hardiest variety to cold. However it may have 50 seeds. It is white fleshed. The Marsh or Marsh Seedless is a smaller fruit and normally later than Duncan.

NOTE: "Seedless" is defined as having 6 or fewer seeds.

The Mandarin group, or "zipper-skin" fruits : Composed of the Satsumas, King "orange", and the tangerines.

C. unshiu, The Satsuma : A mutation originating in Japan, it is grown around the Gulf Coast from Florida to Texas because of its cold resistance. Poncirus rootstock imparts even more cold hardiness. Prof. Mack mentioned an uncle of his growing this combination in his yard in Ridgeland, South Carolina (about 20 miles from Savannah).

C. nobilis, the King "orange" : A cross between a tangerine and a sweet orange (C. reticulata x C. sinensis) although not an attractive fruit, nevertheless used to be the favorite of most growers for dooryard use only. The flavor is superb.

C. reticulata, the tangerine : The true tangerines are the Dancy, Ponkan and Cleopatra. The Robinson is actually a hybrid of the Clementine tangerine and the Orlando tangelo. The "Honey Murcott" formerly called "Smith Tangerine" was undoubtedly a tangor (cross between tangerine and sweet orange) as the parent tree came from the USDA in Miami and was sent to Safety Harbor in 1913.

C. madurensis, the Calamondin, (also C. mitis and C. microcarpa) : A very acid, small attractive fruit, perhaps a hybrid between a tangerine and a kumquat. It is grouped with the limes and is somewhat useful for jams and jellies. Basically it is sold as an ornamental tree.

Hybrids: A number of hybrids were discussed and/or exhibited, namely:

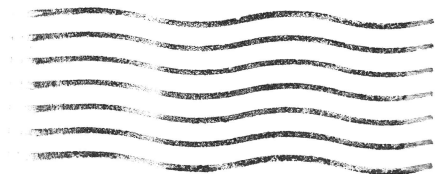
Orangequat: A cross between a sweet orange and a kumquat and sort of pear-shaped. The rind is edible and the pulp juicy and very agreeable in flavor. A prime candidate as a dooryard fruit.

Ugli and Homli: Grapefruit hybrids that live up to their names and are little more than curiosities.

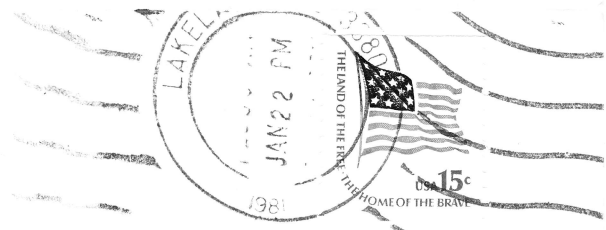
Citrange: A cross between Poncirus trifoliata and C. sinensis (sweet orange) used as a rootstock.

Tangelo: A cross between tangerine and grapefruit. The Orlando tangelo is from a cross of Dancy tangerine pollen on Bowen grapefruit pistil, made by W.T. Swingle in 1911. Originally called Lake, it is grown on a large commercial scale. Prof. Mack declared it his "favorite fruit". The Minneola Tangelo is also a highly recommended fruit for its juice, but does not peel readily.

The most popular rootstock today is Carriso, a citrange. In the future some hybrid of the citrange will most likely be used.



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