



NEWSLETTER

MAY 1981

TAMPA BAY CHAPTER of the
RARE FRUIT COUNCIL INTERNATIONAL, Inc.

NEXT MEETING.....Sunday, May 3, 1981

MEETING PLACE.....The Constantines', Lake LeClare Road, Tampa

PROGRAM....."BLUEBERRIES" by Mrs. A. J. Snapp.
Mr. & Mrs. Snapp have a plant
nursery and a U-Pick operation in
Alachua. They have blueberries,
grapes, apples and strawberries.

REMINDER

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING: There will be a board meeting at 10:00 AM,
Sunday, May 3, 1981 at Lake LeClare.

REPORT OF APRIL 5, 1981 MEETING

By a decision of the Executive Board, the oral reports by the Secretary and the Treasurer will be eliminated from the business portion of the membership meetings. This is to shorten the business meeting, and allow us to bring on the guest speaker earlier. Henceforth, the Minutes of the Meeting, as taken by the Secretary, will be published here in this spot. Submitted changes or corrections will be published the following month; otherwise the minutes will stand as written. The Treasurer's Report will be made to the Executive Board monthly and printed here in the newsletter quarterly.

Due to the fact that the tape made of the April program was of very poor quality, the summary of Dr. Krezdorn's illustrated talk will be rather brief and lacking some of the important points made.

PROGRAM

"Flowering and Fruiting Characteristics of Fruit Trees" was the program given by Dr. A. H. Krezdorn, formerly Head of the Fruit Crops Dept., Univ. of Florida, Gainesville, and now a consultant and author of numerous articles in horticultural publications. His topic got down to the basics of how fruit trees bud and flower, their flowering and fruiting habits, and how this is related to cultural practices in growing our trees.

First, there are two basic types of buds, vegetative and flowering. Buds are the growing points for either vegetative shoots or flowers or even both (called "mixed buds").

PEACH: The peach (and nectarine, of course) fruits on old wood - at least one year old. The budding arrangement is the vegetative bud in the center, between two flowering buds, one on each side. The terminal bud is always a vegetative bud. The peach is a very prolific grower. Heavy pruning is called for to keep it within bounds. However, too heavy pruning or too much fertilizer will result in excessive growth. This in turn causes a condition wherein the terminal growth has "blind" nodes or buds. That is, 1/3 to 1/2 of the shoots will not have any buds. Under normal conditions peaches and nectarines have a tendency to set very heavy crops, resulting

in smaller fruit size. Since the peach does fruit on old wood, heavy pruning will not interfere with the crop, if limited to new growth.

PLUM: Like its relative, the peach, the young plum has a terminal vegetative bud with two flowering buds. As it gets older, it tends to make a more massive display of flowers. Buds occur in clusters and do not all grow at one time. If a freeze should occur during first flowering, there will be later blooms to set fruit, in all likelihood. The cluster buds grow on short stems called fruiting spurs.

POME FRUITS - APPLE, PEAR, QUINCE: The pome fruits also utilize the fruiting spur system. However, when they are young, they produce on long shoots. As they get older they then fruit on spurs. The inflorescence is somewhat unusual, with the older flower in the center (sometimes called "King Bloom"). In passing, Dr. Krezdorn mentioned a low chilling requirement apple grown in Peru and other South and Central American countries known as the "Winter Banana". The tree is grown on a crataegus (haw, but not our haw, which is not very compatible with the apple) rootstock, which results in a dwarfed size. Its fruit is not comparable to the Anna.

FIG: In the fig, flowers occur literally on the inside of a hollow stem. This then becomes the edible fruit. An early crop in the spring may arise from latent buds on the previous season's wood. It is known as a "breba" crop. The second crop arises on new growth and has no special name. Since this second crop is the main crop of the year, pruning is necessary to increase the amount of new growth. Also, fertilize to force growth. Figs will tolerate as severe a pruning as is desired. Due to the serious nematode problem that figs have if grown on their own root, very heavy mulching is advised. Those living near the coast will find oyster shell to be an excellent medium to mulch figs with. Oyster shell will increase the calcium content of the soil, which is highly beneficial to the fig.

GRAPE: The largest world crop is the grape. Citrus is the largest tree crop, with 25% of the world output here in Florida. Florida also grows grapes commercially. Grapes are characterized by very long growth - called canes - which can reach 40 feet to 50 feet in one year. Flower clusters occur on lateral growth. The pruning method depends upon the variety. Wine grapes may be cut back to stumps annually. Flowering renewal spurs will sprout from the trunk stumps.

BANANA: The banana grows from an underground rhizome. It has no true stem. A pseudo-stem grows up the middle to become the flower stalk, eventually bearing the bananas. One should allow only 3 or 4 shoots to grow each year.

PINEAPPLE: The pineapple is a very short stem plant. When the plant is about 12 months old, a flower may be forced by the application of ethylene gas. There is only one fruit per plant and the size of the plant determines the size of the fruit. Growth is seriously inhibited by cold, so pineapple is not a very suitable crop for Florida.

PAPAYA: The papaya is actually a large herb. The flowers are borne in the axils of the leaves. To increase flowering and fruiting, force new growth by applying adequate water and fertilizer. If grown in cold areas, the papaya may be protected by cutting the trunk off at a reasonable height and covering the wound with a tin can. Then bank the plant with soil.

Dr. Krezdorn briefly discussed the unusual fruiting habit of the Mamey Sapote, Cacao, Breadfruit, Jabotacaba, etc. All flower and fruit on old stems and are called cauliflorous. The Jabotacaba is the most familiar to us and grows readily in Central Florida.

Continuation of October 7, 1979 Program by Laymond Hardy

As begun in last month's newsletter, this is taken from a tape of the program cited.

Food Acceptability: What is accepted and relished in one area is not necessarily palatable to people from another area. For example, take black-eyed peas, collard greens and okra which are considered delicacies in Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, etc. Then consider the pigeon peas and black beans relished in Cuba and other Latin American areas. The two groups wouldn't trade dishes for anything. So, anything strange to one's taste buds is generally unpalatable on first tasting and the tendency is never to repeat the experience.

Everyone seems to have this aversion to new flavors, apparently a holdover from our ancestors. Nature has built into us this hesitation to accept new foods so that we will be careful and avoid poisonous items. So, the first taste is usually too repelling or too bland. For example, even the best mango has a little turpentine flavor to repel a person on first try. Chayote is almost tasteless on first try. Later the subtle flavor becomes evident.

One needs to overcome this natural aversion towards new foods and try them. In our case, as growers, that means we should grow a variety of foods. The best diet is a varied diet. We are told that too much of one thing is detrimental. Even foods that are good for you in moderation actually can be bad in large quantity.

In planning your fruit collection, plant old standbys first - plant those things that are known to grow well here. For example:

Citrus - Try a ponkan, one of the true tangerines (of the Mandarin group of citrus). Try Page - it tastes like a fine sweet orange crossed with a sweet tangerine.

Mulberry

Guava

Persimmon - Grow the Oriental or Japanese Persimmon. If it is on native rootstock, it will dwarf somewhat.

Grape - If you try a bunch variety, Blue Lake is preferred over Lake Emerald. Better than the bunch grape is the Muscadine. Try Cowart - it is self-pollinating.

Avocado - Brogden and Bacon are among the best varieties for our area. Be sure that they are on Mexican rootstock, for the sake of hardiness.

Longan - Grow the Kohala variety.

When some species or variety is introduced here and doesn't perform up to expectations, then seedlings should be planted from it and the more the better, in order to find one truly adapted to our conditions and giving a superior fruit. It will require growing many, many seedlings, but the result will be worth the effort and you will have the distinction of having introduced a new variety.

Grow the Loofah or Dishrag gourd (*Luffa cylindrica*). In the young tender stage it is the best eating of all the squashes. The second best is the Cuban pumpkin or Calabasa squash. The Calabasa can be used as a zucchini squash in its early stages (about grapefruit size). As long as the Loofah has no fiber it is edible. Sink a knife into it to test. If the knife strikes fiber, leave it be for a dishrag gourd.

The Phillipine Pea is sweeter than the Black-eyed Pea, but it is very susceptible to powdery mildew. The Okinawa Pea is less sweet than the Black-eyed Pea, but it is the most resistant of the field peas to disease.

Chayote (Vegetable pear, Merliten, Christophine, Cho-cho, Choyote or Cayote)

Mr. Hardy had the first commercially successful Chayote squash (*Sechium edule*) plantation in the U.S. in 1965. Attempts had been made since the 1880's. He used an overhead arbor system, with 14" spacing between the support wires. This allowed litter to be cleaned out more easily. If litter is allowed to remain, it can result in flower blight. Due to the freeze hazard, Central Florida is too far north for a commercial venture. In Miami, heavy overhead irrigation may be used for cold protection.

Plant the whole Chayote fruit 2/3 below ground level, big end down, allowing the sprout to find its way up through the loose soil. That is, plant it tongue end down, as the root grows from the end of the tongue. With proper culture, the plant will grow 4" daily, so water and fertilize adequately. They will not tolerate flooding. If the plant freezes, it will most likely come back from the root in the spring. It is best, however, to bank the stem in the fall before the freezes.

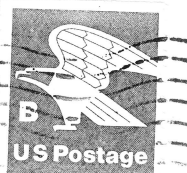
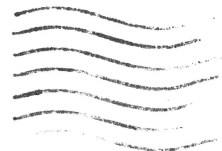
For one not familiar with Chayote, probably the best way to prepare it is as a casserole dish with hamburger and cheese: Cube the Chayotes and boil about 12 minutes. Drain off the water. Cook the hamburger, adding spices to suit, in a skillet. Then add the hamburger to the cooked Chayote in a pot, stir well, mixing in some cheese. Finally, top with grated cheese in the casserole dish.

You can thin slice Chayotes and make french fries. And, they will make a better kosher dill pickle than a cucumber. Also, they make good bread & butter pickles.

(Ed. note - Probably most often Chayote is used like yellow summer squash. Our Secretary, Willard Sarrett, suggests: Cube them and steam them. Then pan fry with butter and a lot of garlic.)

Ray Thorndike, Editor

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