



NEWSLETTER

JUNE 1981

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

UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED, REGULAR MEETINGS ARE HELD THE FIRST SUNDAY OF THE MONTH
AT 2:00 PM AT LOCATION ANNOUNCED HERE

NEXT MEETING:.....NOTE!....SPECIAL WATERMELON FIELD DAY, SUNDAY, JUNE 7, 2:30 PM

LOCATION.....AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH CENTER, 6 MILES SOUTH OF LEESBURG
ON US 27. USE ENCLOSED MAP.

HOSTS.....Dr. Gary W. Elmstrom, Center Director
Dr. James M. Crall, Plant Pathologist

CAR POOL.....Members wishing to participate in a car pool to Leesburg will
meet in the Constantine's parking area at Lake LeClare before
12:00 NOON, Sunday, June 7th. If you are late, you will lose
out.

Dress casually, as there will be watermelon and cantaloupe cut up for eating there.

NOTICES

Do not confuse our Special Field Day with the Watermelon Field Day on Wednesday,
June 3rd, which is open to the public. If you should wish to attend this open Field
Day, registration will begin at 1:15 PM, Wednesday, and the program will start
promptly at 1:30 PM.

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The Federated Garden Circle of Tampa has requested a speaker for approximately forty
members of their group sometime in the fall. If anyone is available and willing,
please phone Mrs. Chris Robertson at 876-1746 to make arrangements. No speaker's fee
is available, she regrets to say.

* * * *

The Miami Plant Sale will be held on Sunday, June 14th at the Youth Fair Grounds.
The opening time was not specified in their newsletter, but if you should be one
half hour late, you would miss out on the best stock (true of all of our sales).

The Rare Fruit and Vegetable Council of Broward County will hold its 6th Annual
Plant Sale on Saturday, May 30, 1981 at 9:00 AM at the Broward County Extension
Service Building, 3245 S.W. 70th Avenue, Ft. Lauderdale.

* * * *

Enclosed with this mailing is the Annual Membership Directory for 1981-1982. Thanks
to a great effort by Irene and Paul Rubenstein in compiling and printing it up, the
many members who had requested it should be happy now. Members who joined after
May 8th missed the list, unfortunately. All others please check your listing for
accuracy and notify Irene if any error exists.

* * * *

NOTE: From now on, per Executive Board order, the Treasurer's Report will be
published as follows:

QUARTER ENDING	REPORT TO EXECUTIVE BOARD	PUBLISHED IN NEWSLETTER	
March 31	April Meeting	May Issue	
June 30	July Meeting	August Issue	
September 30	October Meeting	November Issue	- NOT Including Plant Sale
December 31	January Meeting	February Issue	- Plus Plant Sale Report

REPORT OF MAY 3, 1981 MEETING

President Bill Lester called the meeting to order at 2:00 PM. Jim and Kathy Mercer and their young daughter were welcomed back. This was the first meeting that the Mercers have attended since moving to Chiefland.

Bob Heath requested again that members complete Freeze Damage Reports and turn them in to him. More copies of the blank form will be available at the next few meetings.

Membership dues for 1981-1982 are now past due. Please remit now if you wish to continue receiving the newsletter.

Betty Dickson, Recipe Committee Chairman, reported that two new tropical fruit recipe books will be available in the very near future. She has been in contact with a publisher in St. Petersburg and recommends that we wait until after these other books have come out before we make any decision on publishing the one she is working on.

The June field trip to Leesburg in lieu of our regular ^{meeting} was discussed. Note that there will be NO meeting at Lake LeClare on June 7th. However, there will be a car pool leaving from there at 12:00 Noon for Leesburg.

A plant exchange and auction followed the meeting.

Ray Thorndike, Program Chairman, introduced the guest speakers, Mr. & Mrs. A. J. Snapp from Hainesworth Farms, Alachua. The Snapps own Hainesworth Farms, a U-Pick operation and plant nursery featuring strawberries, blueberries, apples and grapes. Hainesworth Farms is located 18 miles NW of Gainesville on SR 235 between Alachua and La Crosse and about 4 miles E of I-75.

BLUEBERRIES

by Suzanne Snapp

First, I would like to tell you a little bit about ourselves and our farm, Hainesworth Farms. Back in 1972, my husband and I bought the farm that was to become Hainesworth Farms. There were 65 acres at that time, approximately 15 of which had been cleared but were overgrown with weeds that were head high. The rest was in woods. There was an old dilapidated house that dated back to 1901. All in all it presented quite a challenge, particularly since neither of us had ever farmed before. We decided that we would start with two crops, blueberries and grapes. This particular farm was chosen because it had both the acid soil so necessary for blueberries and a sweeter, sandier soil for the grapes. Before buying the land, we had decided that all fruit would be marketed on a U-Pick basis. Our policy from the outset has been to grow the best varieties and finest quality fresh fruit that we possibly can for our customers.

Not having a farming background has been both good and bad. It has meant that we have had to learn a lot of things in a very short time. On the other hand, we were not hampered by traditional farming methods and were more receptive to trying some of the new technologies. For instance, we studied and installed several different types of drip irrigation on a small scale and now most of our crops are irrigated in this manner and some are even fertilized through the drip system.

We started out by planting three acres of blueberries, two acres of grapes and 56 Anna apple trees. Over the years we have gradually added to our plantings and have added an additional item - strawberries - all marketed U-Pick. We also propagate nursery stock for sale, including for the most part blueberry bushes, grape vines and apple trees. These are generally sold bare-rooted in the winter months, although we do containerize some plants for sale during other months of the year.

All fruits grown at Hainesworth Farms, with the exception of strawberries, might be considered rare in Florida, although both blueberries and grapes were grown commercially in the state in the early 1900's. Blueberries have for many years been generally accepted as a fruit of northern origins. However, there are ten species of rabbiteye blueberries native to Florida, five of which grow as far south as Manatee County and one which grows south of Miami. Some of these species have fairly large, flavorful fruit, but this is not true of them all. Some are small, bitter and full of seeds. The world's first commercial blueberry plantings were made in northern Florida, beginning about 1887. Native rabbiteye blueberry bushes were transplanted from the woods and swamps for these original plantings.

There are reports that a Moses A. Sapp, a logging contractor for a northwest Florida sawmill, successfully transplanted 3/4 of an acre of selected native rabbiteyes from the woods to his farm north of Crestview. In 1921, with the help of a northern promoter, Sapp began shipping his berries north by rail. In 1923, Sapp's total income from blueberries was estimated at over \$10,000. 90% of his crop was shipped to Ohio. The blueberry boom was on. Railroad companies, land companies and nurseries all got on the band wagon to promote the new Florida blueberry industry. Railroads were reportedly the most helpful of the three. They actually employed agricultural agents to advise farmers on the cultivation of the berries and also helped to find buyers in the north for the crops, which naturally were shipped by rail. Land companies used the high blueberry profit figures to paint a rosy picture for northern investors in the hopes they would buy Florida land. The nurseries, of course, were interested in plant sales, particularly since they could gather these plants from the woods easily and without cost.

By the mid-twenties it is estimated that there were over 2000 acres of blueberries being cultivated in northern Florida and that at least one cannery was in operation. By 1930 the bubble began to burst, primarily due to low berry quality. Berries varied from plant to plant in size, flavor and color. Moses Sapp was familiar with wild blueberries and carefully selected superior types for his plantation. Others, in the rush to get rich quick, were not so careful. Because of this the Florida blueberry soon earned the reputation for being small, gritty and not too good.

Also, at this same time, the New Jersey and Michigan blueberry industries were emerging, using clonally propagated cultivars introduced by the USDA. This meant that plants would bear fruit that was uniform in size and high in quality. These cultivars introduced in the north were probably no better than what would have been obtained had the same attention been given to breeding the rabbiteyes of the south. After 1930 commercial harvesting in Florida was generally unprofitable and most of the plantings were abandoned. Except for home use, interest in the rabbiteye blueberry lay dormant until the 1940's when the University of Georgia in conjunction with the USDA initiated a breeding program at the Tifton Station. Many releases have been made through Tifton, primarily under the auspices of Dr. Tom Brightwell - Woodard, Tifblue, Briteblue, Delite, Climax and Bluebell, to name just a few. More recently, the University of Florida has also become involved in breeding blueberries and has released several selections - BlueGem, Sharpblue, Flordablue, Avonblue, Aliceblue and Beckyblue.

Blueberries are most productive on soils which are acid, somewhere in the range of 4.2 to 5.2 pH, and in full sun. Before planting, the soil should be well cultivated to a depth of at least 6 inches. We usually use a rototiller in planting and mix the equivalent of about three gallons of peat in the soil at each planting spot. For pollination purposes, at least two different varieties which bloom at the same time should be planted near each other.

Fertilization usually consists of a balanced fertilizer, azalia-camellia type, in February at a rate of about one ounce per plant for new plantings. This is followed by a high nitrogen fertilizer such as ammonium sulphate, about one ounce per plant in June and again in August. Rabbiteyes are relatively free of insects and diseases as of now. A limited amount of pruning is carried out as plants mature - mainly to promote the growth of strong new wood in order to maintain high production, and in young plants to remove weak twiggy and low growth.

Rabbiteye blueberries are normally propagated from softwood cuttings under intermittent mist in a media of half peat and half perlite. Cuttings approximately four inches long are taken after the first flush of spring growth before the shoots have stopped terminal growth. Generally all but two or three upper leaves are removed, and the cutting is set one to two inches deep in the bed. Rooting normally takes 6 to 8 weeks, at which time they can be removed to pots or lined out in nursery rows.

Rooting from hardwood cuttings is generally not as satisfactory as softwood. Although a great number of blueberries in the north are rooted this way - very few use this method for propagating rabbiteyes. One of the newest and most exciting methods of propagation in the southeast is by tissue culture. This method seems to provide for virus free plant material, for rapidly producing new cultivars, and as a means of propagating difficult to root material. Dr. Paul Lyrene of the Fruit Crops Department, University of Florida, Gainesville is responsible for leading the way in tissue culture of blueberries.

To start a tissue culture, Dr. Lyrene takes a shoot that is $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches long of rapidly flushing growth, sterilizes it and puts it in a vial that has about 5 milliliters of liquid media. (This media is made up of sugar, water nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium and trace elements.) Then agar is added to solidify the media. This is the same substance used to thicken commercially made ice cream. All of this must be done under very aseptic sanitary conditions. The tubes, once planted, are placed under weak fluorescent light for 16 hours a day. After four months, each tube will have a colony of about 50 shoots, each with about 15 leaves. at this point there are two options: First, remove the colony from the vial, separate the plants, cut each shoot into two-node sections and replant in vials. Each node will then produce plants. The original colony will yield enough material for 250 vials. At the end of another four months, repeat the process. Each of the 250 vials would produce 250 more or enough plant material for 62,500 vials. The second option is to remove the colony from the bottle, cut the plants which are about three inches long into one inch sections and plant directly into peat under intermittent mist. These tiny cuttings will root within three weeks. After one more week they can be potted. Or, they can be left in the mist bed and the new growth on the little plants can be cut every two or three weeks and stuck in the peat, thereby multiplying cuttings at a tremendous rate. We have been doing this in our mist house. The amazing thing is to see the root system on these little plants. The tops do not have much growth, but the roots are incredible.

Tissue culture is a fascinating new technology and is still very much in the experimental stage. It seems as though the Florida blueberry industry is back on the track again. This time it has a more solid foundation and hopefully a much better outlook.

It is now official that the Tampa Bay Chapter's Second Annual Plant Sale will be held on Sunday, October 18th at the State Fair Grounds in Tampa. This will be in the same building that our Florida State Fair booth has been in for the past two years. We shall probably have a regular meeting on Sunday, October 4th for last minute planning and perhaps with a short program by one of our several world travelers.

SPECIAL RFCI WATERMELON FIELD DAY

SUNDAY, JUNE 7, 1981 at 2:30 PM

University of Florida, IFAS
Agricultural Research Center, Leesburg

Hosts: Dr. Gary W. Elstrom, Center Director
Dr. James M. Crall, Plant Pathologist

Members are invited to join the car pool leaving from the Constantines' parking area at Lake LeClare at 12:00 Noon. Be there BEFORE 12:00! Otherwise, follow the map of the Leesburg area below.

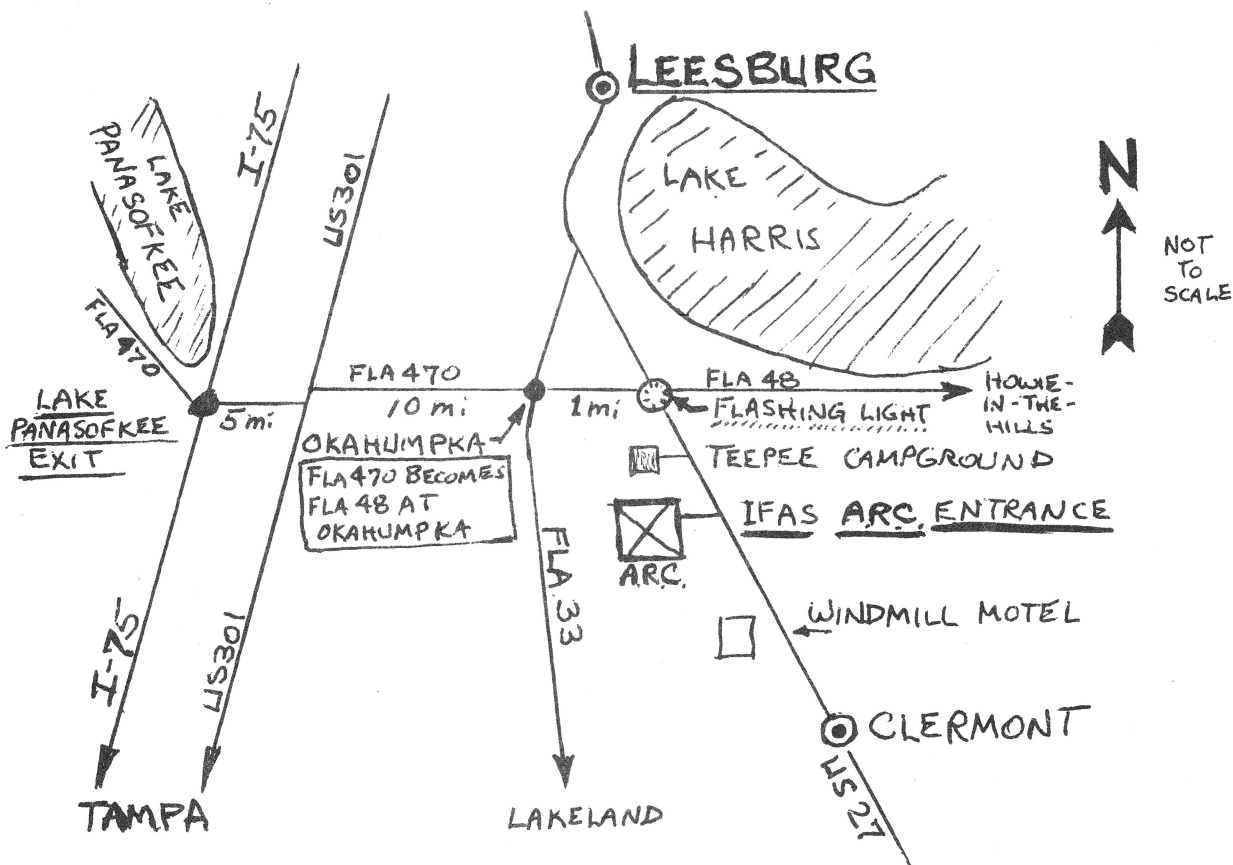
Look for the letters IFAS on the Research Center entrance sign on the WEST side of U.S.27, 6 miles south of Leesburg.

Look for the following landmarks on U.S.27:

TEEPEE Campground - Just NORTH of IFAS ARC entrance.

Windmill Motel - 1/4 mile SOUTH of IFAS ARC entrance.

Drive on past the Lab/Office Building located 400 ft. from the highway entrance. Follow the road to the farm. We shall meet in the "Breezeway".



CASUAL ATTIRE RECOMMENDED

Tampa Bay Chapter
Rare Fruit Council International
P.O. Box 16003
Tampa, Florida 33687

1981-1982
Officers & Committee Chairmen

Executive Board

President.....Bill Lester
Vice President.....Paul Rubenstein
Secretary.....Willard Sarrett
Treasurer.....Irene Rubenstein
Immediate Past Pres...Joe Constantine
At-Large Member.....Ray Thorndike
Alt. At-Large Member.....Bob Heath

Standing Committee Chairs

Bylaws & Governance.....Bob Heath
Auditing.....Jud Newcombe
Plant & Seed Exchange.....Bob Heath
Program.....Ray Thorndike

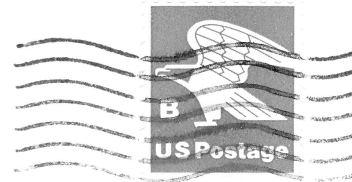
Ad Hoc Committee Chairs

Annual Plant Sale.....Joe Constantine
Newsletter Editor.....Ray Thorndike
Fla. State Fair Booth..Eliz. MacManus
Membership.....Glenn Warren
Correspondence.....Rosalie Obregon
Hospitality.....Jane Constantine
Research & Fruit List.....Bob Heath
Recipes.....Betty Dickson
Publicity.....Paul Rubenstein
Historian.....Kay Netscher
Librarian.....Maja Byvoet/
Dave Schwaderer

Key Dates

June 7.....	Field Trip to Leesburg	October 18...	Second Annual Plant Sale
July 12.....	Reg. Meeting - Ed Grosz	November 1.	Reg. Meeting - Dr. Crocker
August 9...	Hughes Vineyard Field Trip	December 6.	Reg. Meeting - Dr. Marlowe
September 13.	Reg. Meeting - G. Joyner	January -	
October 4.....	Regular Meeting	February -	Florida State Fair

Tampa Bay Chapter Newsletter
Rare Fruit Council International, Inc.
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