



NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 1981

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

NEXT MEETING.....SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 1981 at 2:00 PM

*** REMEMBER *** THE SECOND SUNDAY IN SEPTEMBER **

MEETING PLACE.....HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY AGRICULTURAL BUSINESS CENTER
(COUNTY AG. AGENTS' BUILDING), SEFFNER

Take I-4 to EXIT 8 SOUTH, State Road 579. Go past traffic light at US 92 intersection. Building less than $\frac{1}{2}$ mile on left (east) side of US 92. Use parking lot. Meeting room in rear of building. Main door will probably be locked. Walk around.

THE PROGRAM

'INSECT PESTS AND DISEASES OF FRUIT TREES'

by Gene Joyner, Urban Horticulturist and Extension Agent I, Palm Beach County. Gene is a very active member of the Palm Beach Chapter as well as Miami. He was our September speaker last year. Let's show him a better attendance this time.

This will be our first meeting in what we hope will be our permanent quarters. The county has been very cooperative towards us. Let us not do anything to spoil this relationship. We must leave the facilities in as good condition as we find them, obviously. We shall need volunteers to clean up after the meeting.

If all goes well, we will eventually have our own plantings at this same site. The county has welcomed the idea of a demonstration planting of fruit trees and shrubs. This shall be coordinated with Extension Agent Sydney Feinberg and we shall need a committee to select appropriate plants, plan the landscaping and, finally, schedule work sessions for planting and maintenance.

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBERS - PLEASE NOTE. There shall be a Board meeting at 1:00 PM prior to the regular meeting on Sept. 13th.

If you have plants suitable for exchange and/or auction at the September meeting, give them to Bob Heath before the meeting begins. Of course this applies to plants not suitable for the Annual Plant Sale in October. For instance, I have some papayas, dewberries, etc. that won't keep til then. Other candidates are plants that will still be too small in October. Or, maybe you don't want to re-pot that spindley specimen in the ugly container. So, bring it along. The next exchange will not be until November.

This exchange and auction feature of our meetings is largely being ignored this year, which is unfortunate. How else are members going to acquire rare plants unless they travel far to the south? Perhaps we don't have enough propagation addicts among us. If you have good varieties or have access to seeds or weed for propagation, we need your participation.

If there is a lack of understanding as to how the plant exchange/auction works, be assured it couldn't be much simpler. Plants that you bring entitle you to

select from those of like value that others bring. Plants may be designated for auction only. The exchange is free, no money involved, but is supervised by Bob Heath. Do not remove plants without his knowledge. The exchange and auction are held out-of-doors immediately following the regular meeting. Plants left over at the completion of the free exchange will be auctioned off by Bob Heath. All proceeds shall go into the Chapter treasury - pay Bob or Irene Rubenstein (our treasurer). So this is another reason to get more participation - to help build up the treasury. If you have any suggestions on how to stimulate more interest here, please see Bob.

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Report of August 9, 1981 Meeting

For the August meeting, Chapter members were guests of Tom Hughes at his vineyard in Dever. There was no formal program scheduled. The president and vice president being absent, there was no business meeting, either. Past President Joe Constantine took over and ran the general meeting. Members had arranged a show table for the expected TV cameras and crews, having brought samples of many fruits for display. Fruit specimens included quince, litchis, apples (Tropical Beauty), mango, avocado, jujubes, white sapotes, persimmons, chinese chestnuts, tallow-nuts, figs, pears, grapes, naturally, and more. It was truly an excellent display, but, unfortunately, the TV crews never showed up as we were pre-empted by the PATCO (aircraft controllers union) pickets in Tampa whom the reporters felt were more newsworthy for 6:00 & 11:00 presentation. I wonder. One TV crew did show up on Monday, however, to Tom Hughes' benefit.

Tom showed members around his vineyard and invited anyone who wished to purchase grapes to pick their own. Also, he had grape plants available at a discount. Fortunately, the rain that was threatening held off until the meeting finished. Our thanks to Tom for hosting us.

NOW - PLEASE NOTE. we shall try again for TV coverage in order to publicize our Second Annual Plant Sale coming up on October 18th (a Sunday) at the State Fair Grounds. Paul Rubenstein informs me that he will try to have the three stations at Seffner on the 13th of Sept. So - please make the effort again to bring fruits for display. We shall try to fill up another table like last time. I hope we can do half as well. Note this on your calendar.

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From the April 1979 Miami Bulletin a portion of an article by Joan C. Green entitled, Plant Propagation Notes :

STEM CUTTINGS. Many fruit plants can be propagated economically by stem cuttings. Stem sections are cut from the plant and rooted in a well aerated soil medium in flats or other containers. Cuttings root best if placed under mist, but if a mist system is not available, one can be improvised by making a plastic tent that will hold in the humidity. It is not necessary to remove the leaves from cuttings placed in mist. Plants that root well from cuttings are:

Barbados cherry
Cherry-of-the-Rio Grande
Diospyros spp.
Fig
Governors Plum
Guinep
Macadamia

Monstera deliciosa (Ceriman)
Mulberry
Natal Plum (Carissa)
Passionfruit
Pitaya
Wampee

EDITOR'S CORNER - PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

At the risk of boring my captive audience, I would like to share with you some of my 1981 harvesting successes and failures. If we can share our experiences and observations, maybe we can avoid some wasted efforts and learn what are the best plants for our area. I hope that some other members come forward and submit their tales for publication here. That is part of what this organization is all about. Also, if you have questions on what to grow, how to grow it or on what you are growing, please don't be shy. I'll print the questions and then the answers if some kind soul obliges.

In the past year a number of my plants and trees have come into first bearing. I began raising fruit trees in earnest 5 years ago. Before that it was mainly roses and hibiscus. The roses were too demanding and the hibiscus caused too much back-breaking labor at spring pruning time. Besides, just being pretty wasn't enough. If I was going to slave over it, it had better feed me, too. I had already had great success growing papayas, and we had full grown and bearing lequat and orange trees. So out went most of the roses, all the hibiscuses and nearly everything else. In went Cattley guavas, Cavendish bananas, a Dovyalis Hybrid, a macadamia, White Sapote and a couple of avocados - Brogden & Winter Mexican. Then I learned of The Rare Fruit Council and joined both Miami and Palm Beach groups. Since then I have crammed this tiny city lot in Lakeland with over 80 specimens ranging from apples & blueberries to Black Sapote & Mamey Sapote - the latter two in 15 gal. Lirio cans.

This year, probably my biggest success has been in having papaya to eat in every month since last December, despite the January freeze. Between wrapping the trees and the use of grove heaters all night, I managed to salvage 8 trees and much of their fruit. To be honest, some of the fruits eaten before hot weather set in were of very poor quality. Like bananas, papayas need warm nights to fix the fruit sugars. I grow several types of papaya, but my favorite is the pink hermaphrodite (papaya roja) common to Central America. These are elongated club-shaped and usually weigh between 4 and 8 pounds. They are also more practical for Florida as the Papaya Fruit Fly is not as successful in depositing her eggs in this fruit due to the smaller internal cavity and resultant thicker flesh.

My top delight this year was the 'Sunred' nectarine tree. Though bought only 3 years ago, it yielded nearly 3 bushels of fruit over a 2 week span. This is a superior fruit for eating out of hand. A fresh-picked, sun-ripened Sunred nectarine is an unbeatable treat and one I enjoyed at least 20 times each day during the short harvest season. The unripe fruit, still hard, but with nearly full color, can be cooked and eaten like plums. In fact, it is virtually impossible to distinguish them from cooked plums.

So, the Sunred deserves the highest recommendation for growing in our Central Florida climate. Its chilling requirement is properly matched to our zone. The only tree that I have seen grow faster is the Panama Berry or Strawberry Tree (Muntingia calabura). The only problem I have had with it is keeping it within bounds. It MUST be pruned to a manageable size. There were no disease or insect troubles in my yard. A standard spray schedule is recommended, however. The birds will help you to harvest the fruit, but there is more than enough to go around.

At the same time the nectarines were ripening, my 'Early Bruce' and 'Burbank' plums were fruiting for the first time. These are also excellent fruits but shy bearers without a pollinator. I bought a 'Methley' from the club for that purpose, but it won't be old enough to do its job for a couple of years.

Be sure to note this fact of simultaneous fruiting - mid to late May. When two similar fruits like this come at the same time, one certainly dims the enjoyment of the other. As good as the plums are, if I had been aware of this circumstance I would not have planted them.

Prior to the nectarines and plums we ate several desserts provided by my 'Sharpblue' blueberry bushes. We had dishfuls of fresh berries, one pie and a couple batches of muffins. I have no pollinator for the Sharpblue. 'Flordablue' is recommended, but not necessary unless you want to try to increase the fruit set. Sharpblue is a very good eating berry. However, it takes some training to learn when and how to pick them. Even when fully ripe they don't pick like the book tells you. Instead of rolling off into your hand when properly manipulated by thumb and forefinger, my Sharpblues often had to be wrenched from the bush. And color is of almost no help in deciding which berry is ripe. They can be bluer than blue and still curdle your taste buds. Time for a Miracle Fruit, no? Eventually they get an 'old' blue look, somewhat faded. They are usually ripe by then. Experience is the only teacher.

My second biggest treat was the White Sapote harvest (mid-June to mid-August this year). I had only eaten one fruit before this - from the same tree. I managed to salvage only one fruit from the March 1980 freeze, but this year radiant heat saved about 1/3 of the crop. Even that added up to several hundred. Nearly everyone likes this fruit. I gave fruit to many people, few of whom had ever heard of it before, and only two didn't like it. And some, like me, raved over it. This is the 'Dade' variety, originating as seedling SES 888 in 1935 at the Subtropical Experiment Station. There are many newer and better known varieties, but the Dade is well worth propagating. Because of the freeze, most of my fruit were small, 2½" to 3" diameter, and had one large seed in the center like an avocado. The flesh is sweet, about the consistency of an avocado, and the thin skin inedible. Among others, the Dade lacks the bitter resinous aftertaste that poorer varieties have - and which has given this fruit such a bad press over the years. With some public education this fruit could be a good market fruit under a better name, such as Casimiroa (the genus). Picked while still hard, it will ship easily and ripen later without loss of quality. That certainly is not true of the mango, avocado, peach, plum and countless others that are worthless as found in the supermarket. I have noted no cultural problems except the fact that it blooms in the winter, the crop thus being subject to freeze loss; no diseases yet, no insect troubles. Very frustrated Caribbean Fruit Flies constantly crawled all over the fruits and couldn't dent them. In fact, they would be so intent that I could often squash them with my thumb. I am air-layering and raising seedlings for graft, so we should eventually have plenty for members and the annual plant sales. I forgot to mention that the fruit refrigerates well, apparently for weeks, and ripe fruit can be frozen, also.

This is the first fruiting year for two of my persimmon trees. One is a seedling from a bought fruit in the fall of '77. The first fruit were eaten on August 15th. Their flavor is excellent and they are the juiciest persimmons I have ever eaten. Strangely this tree is the healthiest of the six I have planted. Four are purchased grafted and named varieties. Three of those have definite health problems. My Hanafuyu is healthy this year after a slow start three years ago, but it won't set one fruit. The seedling had thirty-five fruit, this its first year, and held them all to maturity. Personally, I have not been favorably impressed with the Tanenashi, the standard nursery offering. If more seedlings were tried, we would soon have us a good, healthy variety for this region. If only mine had slightly larger fruit...

My Anna and Dorsett Golden apples on dwarfing rootstocks bore for the first time this year. I had a brief bout with Fireblight (I have three loquat trees in the yard - so I'll never try a pear tree, which are supposed to be notorious for Fireblight susceptibility) and the fruit on both trees were very small and plagued with some kind of boring insect, the flesh being riddled with small worm tracks - very unappetizing. The Annas were of very good flavor and consistency, but I would like to know if their small size was in any way related to the use of dwarfing rootstock - ?

Two of my five year old Kiwi vines bloomed for the first time, but unfortunately they were both males. I have one other vine and it had better danged sure find some female flowersto hang out next May.

CENTRAL FLORIDA FRUIT LIST

More on the fruit list: as mentioned last month, Bob Heath, Research & Fruit List Committee Chairman, put together a first draft of an official fruit list for 1981. Miami, Palm Beach and Australia have their own separate lists as does the California Rare Fruit Growers, also. Our list is to be organized differently, segregating species into groups with similar cold hardiness. Because the climate in our area is far from tropical, many of the plants on other lists are hopelessly impractical to grow in the ground (as opposed to tub culture) without protection. So, Bob has arranged our list in descending tolerance, from most hardy to least hardy. We have still much to learn about the many species grown here and some may start out listed in the wrong group. So, members and friends will have to come forward and help update our list. As soon as possible, copies will be distributed to everyone on the mailing list. Meanwhile, I have selected those species which are the most logical candidates for your home landscape in Central Florida. There are many other lesser known and unproved plants and maybe one of your favorite critters is missing.

Oriental persimmon	Blueberry (Sharpblue, Flordablue)
Native persimmon	Chinese Chestnut
Pecan	Fig
Black Mulberry	Feijoa, Pineapple guava
Jelly Palm (<u>Butia capitata</u>)	Pomegranate
Chinese jujube	Loquat
Apple (Anna & Golden Dorsett)	Japanese Plum (Methley, Early Bruce, Burbank, Excelsior, etc.)
Peach/Nectarine (Red Ceylon, Flordared, Okinawa, Flordabelle, Flordawon, McRed, Flordasun, Sunred nectarine, White Knight, Jewel)	Pear
Cherry of the Rio Grande	Blackberry, Dewberry
Carob	Grape (bunch & muscadine)
Strawberry Bush (<u>Myrica rubra</u>)	Mexican avocado & hybrids
Pitanga, Surinam Cherry	Guatemalan avocado & hybrids
Carambola	Jaboticaba
Macadamia, Queensland Nut	Kei Apple (<u>Dovyalis caffra</u>)
Casimiroa, White Sapote	Cattley guava, Strawberry guava (red & yellow varieties)
Ceriman, <u>Monstera deliciosa</u>	Mysore raspberry
Downy Myrtle	Prickly Pear & Tuna species
Carissa species (Karanda & Natal Plum)	Rose Apple
*Florida Apricot (<u>Dovyalis hybrid</u>)	Tree Tomato
*Banana (Ladyfinger, Cavendish, Orinoco, etc.)	*Pineapple
*Guava	#Papaya
*Passionfruit vine	*Barbados Cherry
*Miracle Fruit (<u>Synsepalum dulcificum</u>)	*Pitomba
#Chayote	*Grunichama
	*Litchi
	*Longan
	#Cocona
	#Naranjilla
	#Ground Cherry (<u>Physalis species</u>)

* Perhaps too tender for some locations. However, some will rebound quickly from the roots after a severe freeze.

Grown as an annual.

Of course, in addition there are the common citrus species plus specialty citrus, such as Pummelo, Calamondin, 'King' orange, Satsuma, citranges, citrangequats, citrumelos, tangelos, tangers, limequats, etc.

From the December 1970 Newsletter, 'Rare Fruit Council of South Florida' (Miami):

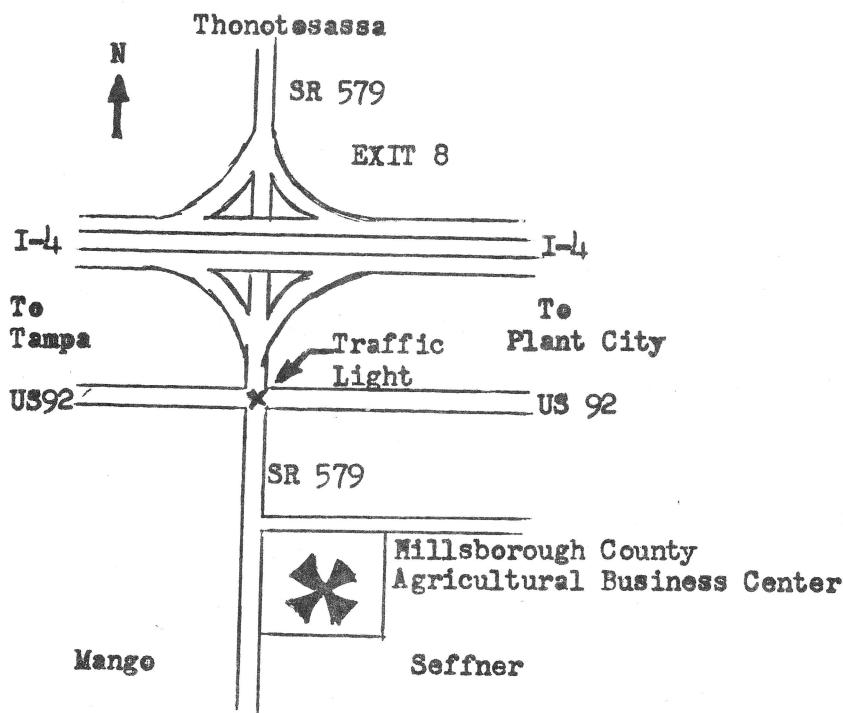
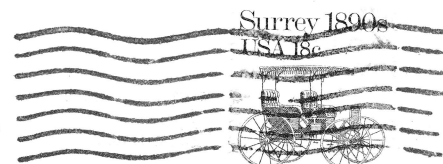
Plastic Bags for Plants
by William F. Whitman

Clear plastic bags offer a simple and easy means of obtaining nearly 100% relative humidity for the air surrounding a potted plant so enclosed. These miniature green-houses should not be exposed to direct sunlight where the heat trapped could cause the plant to die. After a plant has been so enclosed for over several days, caution should be used in removing the bag and this is done gradually to allow the plant's acclimatization to the difference between the moist air prevailing inside the bag and the drier outside air. Listed below are some of the situations in which plastic bag covers have been found useful.

- Rooting cuttings. This offers an easy and inexpensive alternative to using mist propagation. Plastic bags are also effective for enclosing weak marcots that may otherwise fail to survive after being removed from the parent tree.
- Rejuvenation of Shipped-in Plants. Is that shipment of live plants more dead than alive? It's amazing how plastic bags can save them.
- Plant Protection from Cold. Bringing potted plants indoors during that cold front? The warm dry air of your home can cause dessication and injury of the foliage. Enclosing in plastic bags solves this problem.
- Leaving for Summer, No One to Water Potted Plants? Cover plants with plastic bags, put in shade and they will be alive when you return. The writer kept a Pulasan in a plastic bag for over three years with no adverse effects.

Ray Thorndike, Editor

Tampa Bay Chapter Newsletter
Rare Fruit Council International, Inc.
3114 Troy Avenue
Lakeland, Florida 33803



P. Judson Newcombe
3114 Deer Park
Temple Terrace, FL 33617