



NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 1982

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

CHAPTER MAIL ADDRESS: P.O. BOX 16003, TAMPA, FL 33687

MEETINGS ARE HELD AT 2:00 PM, THE SECOND SUNDAY OF THE MONTH, AT THE SEFFNER
AGRICULTURAL BUILDING, UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED

NEXT MEETING.....SUNDAY, OCTOBER 10, 1982 AT 2:00 PM

MEETING PLACE.....HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY AGRICULTURAL CENTER
5339 STATE ROAD 579, SEFFNER
TAKE EXIT 8 SOUTH OFF I-4

PROGRAM.....NO GUEST SPEAKER, BUT BRING PLANTS FOR EXCHANGE
THE AGENDA WILL BE THE FINAL PLANNING AND
PREPARATION FOR THE PLANT SALE.

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THIRD ANNUAL PLANT SALE

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 17, 1982

1:00 PM

FORT HOMER HESTERLY ARMORY

500 NORTH HOWARD AVENUE, TAMPA

TAKE HOWARD & ARMENIA EXIT #24

OFF I-275

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The sale set-up will begin Saturday morning, October 16th. Volunteers are urgently needed for work all day Saturday and Sunday. Set-up will continue Sunday morning and members are needed during the sale to assist the public in finding the plants they want and to answer questions. There are also booths to man and finally, there is a packing-up of club property late Sunday afternoon.

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NEW MEMBERS

Charles F. & Joyce A. Allyn, 4747 - 28th Street, North, St. Petersburg 33714
Tel. 522-3453
or 525-6609

Robe B. Carson, 1812 Overlook Drive, Mt. Dora 32757

Tom & Rosie Goldsworthy, P.O. Box 537, Odessa 33556, Tel. 920-6147

RE-INSTATEMENT

Daren M. (Mrs. Chas.) Engel, 15307 Indian Head Drive, Tampa 33618, Tel. 961-6900

SEPTEMBER 12, 1982 MEETING

Our thanks go to Ken & Mildred Palmer for being our gracious hosts and permitting some members to get their first glimpse of some of the more exotic fruit trees. Some of these do not do so well on the other side of the bay. Following the tour of the Palmers' nursery, members and guests continued on to Aubrey & Betty Dickson's home on Venetian Isles. Besides a tour of their yard and also that of neighbor/member Fran Stevens' yard, Betty had a tasting table set up bearing exotic canned fruits found in local Chinese markets. Among the taste treats were:

Guava shells with cream cheese, papaya pickles, green papaya chunks (Fruta Bomba), Mamey Sapote, Rambutan, Maprang (Mariam Plum), bitterless orange-peel (Cascos de Naranja), Lemon Squares and Guava-peach jam (both courtesy of Fran Stevens), Carambolas, Ladyfinger Bananas and Avocado (all courtesy of the Beasors), Fig preserve (courtesy of Christine Prodanas), and finally, furnished by the Dicksons, frozen Avocado puree, candy fruit chews and a bottle of Nance wine.

At least 35 members and guests enjoyed the Dicksons' hospitality. Our sincere thanks to them, Fran Stevens and all others who contributed to the making of a very enjoyable afternoon in Pinellas County. We hope to have more events and meetings in Pinellas in the future, since we have a sizeable percentage of our membership there. As we saw this day, many of the more tender plants may be grown in waterfront and other more protected areas of Pinellas, plants that would have to be grown with extra protective measures on the "mainland." Therefore we should acquire more members than we have so far from the St. Petersburg-Clearwater area.

I forgot to mention that Aubrey & Betty Dickson showed us the movies they made on their July trip to Costa Rica & Panama (Tom Economou's scheduled tour with Gene Joyner as co-host.)

Anyone wish to volunteer as hosts for a chapter meeting next July or September? It is planned to have all summer meetings outside our regular meeting hall. Seeing other members' plantings is quite educational as well as interesting. Any expenses incurred would be paid by the club. Please contact Ray Thorndike, Program Chairman.

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For the article of interest this month, I have condensed and adapted the program given on the tenth anniversary of the founding of the Rare Fruit Council of South Florida (Miami), March 12, 1965, by Dr. H.S. Wolfe. The topic selected by Dr. Wolfe is equally as pertinent seventeen and a half years later. - Editor

PROBLEMS IN ESTABLISHING VARIETIES

by Dr. H. S. Wolfe

The matter which I am going to discuss with you is one on which I have been thinking occasionally without really going into it deeply, and I decided to take this opportunity to explore it for my own satisfaction, if not for yours. My question is, is it better to import established cultivars of new species or to import seeds and select cultivars from the resulting seedlings? In search of answers, I have examined the source of the presently popular cultivars of fruits in this country.

(Because of the length of this article, the temperate fruits were eliminated. - Ed.)

B. Experience with Citrus Fruits

1. Orange. Oranges were grown in Europe for some time, several centuries probably, before any were grown here, but little or nothing done in the way of selection before the planting of orange seeds in Florida around 1565. When orange growing was undertaken seriously a century or so ago in Florida and California, there were many named varieties available in Europe and these were introduced here. At the same time, selections were made in Florida from the thousands of seedling trees available. Only a very few of the introductions proved valuable, but among these was Valencia, which dominates both the Florida and the California industry. Two other importations which have proved valuable were Washington and Jaffa, both rather minor varieties in Florida, but Washington in second rank in California. Temple was also introduced, in this case, from Jamaica. The rest of our Florida varieties originated here: Hamlin, Parson Brown, Pineapple, and many more.
2. Lemon. Perhaps half the commercial lemon crop is of seedling origin, chiefly Eureka, while the other half is introduced varieties like Lisbon and Genoa. These are the varieties in California, where the vast majority of American lemons are grown. When we had a lemon industry in Florida in the 1880's and 1890's, the same thing was true here, but in the recent new attempts to have a Florida lemon industry, chief interest has been shown in selection of trees of uncertain origin, perhaps some of them seedlings which were found in Florida groves.
3. Lime. The Persian or Tahiti lime undoubtedly originated as a seedling in California, while the common seedy lime which we call Key, Mexican or West Indian, has never been grown as a cultivar anywhere on a large scale. The so-called Rangpur and Kusai limes, and the very lime-like calamondin, all came to Florida as seeds and have yielded no cultivars here or anywhere else.
4. Tangerine. The prevailing habit of nucellar embryony in tangerines, almost eliminating variation in seedlings, complicates the picture in this case. Dancy and Ponkan are cultivars selected from seedlings here, but forms exactly like them have been growing for centuries in China, where no cultivars were selected because they grow well and true to type from seed. Cleopatra and Clementine are still grown as seedlings, not as cultivars.
5. Satsuma. While satsumas are not of much commercial importance in Florida, the hardness to cold of these mandarins makes them valuable in the Gulf Coast region and, to some extent, in California. All present varieties were introduced from Japan, Owari being the only one known in Florida. There is an opportunity for development of new varieties for northern Florida by seedling selection, to give greater range of season and fruit character.
6. Kumquat. All of our kumquat varieties were imported as cultivars, also; Nagami, Meiwa and Marumi being the important ones. So far as I know, nobody has ever tried to develop new kumquat varieties.
7. Grapefruit. While this species arose in Jamaica, no selection of varieties was ever made there. Seeds were planted in Florida around 1823, and most of the varieties grown now anywhere in the world had their origin in selected Florida seedlings or their mutants. It is interesting to speculate on what the result would have been if there had been well established cultivars available for introduction a century ago. Would we have been content to import them and not have grown seedlings for selection?

C. Experience with Subtropical Fruits other than Citrus.

1. Lychee. While H.S. Sanford had introduced the lychee in the late 1870's - we do not know whether as seedling or as marcot - the 1886 freeze destroyed all the trees then in Florida. The next introduction was the Chen Purple cultivar, commonly but improperly known as Brewster, and this was definitely of marcotted trees. It has proved fairly well adapted to Florida, and yet we have not had yields such as other countries report. Many other varieties have been imported, chiefly from China, but such high quality cultivars as No Mai and Kwa Lu have proved even less productive here than Chen. The only serious attempt at producing seedlings from which to make selections is the small seedling planting made (37) years ago by Earl Wirt, Jr. One or two reasonably satisfactory cultivars have come from this test plot, but we really need several thousand seedlings from several different parent varieties to give us a chance for real improvement in lychee adaptation.

2. Fig. This ancient fruit was grown from cuttings in Europe for centuries before the discovery of America. Indeed, the principal commercial variety, Lcb Injir, is considered to have been grown near Smyrna for over 3000 years. All of the varieties commonly grown in the United States, either in California or the Gulf Coast, were introduced from Europe. Thousands of seedling figs have been grown in this country since 1880, and in Europe during the preceding century, with few or no worthwhile results. All of the cultivars must have been seedlings once, of course, but perhaps on an average of once in a century a really good seedling arose among thousands of seedlings. Two minor varieties, King and Beale, developed locally as seedlings have been planted in California in recent years.

3. Oriental Persimmon. Both grafted plants and seeds were imported, beginning about 1877, and many seeds were planted from fruits borne here. Most of the varieties grown today are imported cultivars from Japan or China, Tanenashi, Fuyugaki, Hachiya, Okame, Tamopan, Tsuru, etc. A few less important varieties have been selected from seedlings, Costata, Ormond and Triumph being the most notable ones. The results are far more favorable for seedling selection of kakis than figs, but they are not really very encouraging for either species.

D. Experience with Tropical Fruits.

1. Mango. A very large number of mango cultivars were available in India when Florida growers became seriously interested in the mango about (100) years ago, and by the end of the first decade of this century more than 60 varieties had been introduced. Not a single one of these, whether from India, the Philippines, or the West Indies, ever became commercially valuable here. All of our commercial varieties originated in Florida as chance seedlings. It is true that cross pollination of different types of mango played an important role in providing more varied combinations of genes from which to select, but this gene pool could as easily and more cheaply been provided by importing seeds of good quality varieties from India. One small problem was the unreliability of Indian nurserymen as to the fruit quality of their cultivars, but this would have been no more of a handicap in seed importation than it was with the cultivars imported. Incidentally, Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and India have been no more able to grow each other's varieties successfully than Florida was with India's.

2. Avocado. Since nobody in the world had ever propagated avocado vegetatively before George Cellon did in 1900, there were no cultivars anywhere before then. In the next two decades, Florida nurserymen imported dozens of varieties from California, and Popenoe and others sent us about 50 scions of selected seedlings from Central America and Ecuador to grow as varieties. Not one of all those introductions

proved really valuable for us, although Nabal is a minor commercial variety. Introduction of Fuerte to California, and of Puebla to a lesser extent, as scions of selected seedlings from Atlixco, Mexico, was a phenomenal success, but these were the only really valuable introductions to California. All other commercial varieties there and here came from locally grown seedlings, and varieties which are satisfactory in one state are usually not so in the other. I do not criticize my old friend, Wilson Popenoe, for sending in scions, for it was the best horticultural judgment of his day to do so; but in the advantageous position of hindsight, sending seeds would have been a better procedure. Here again, the value of having two different races of avocado available for natural cross pollination, and thus for greatly increased gene combinations, has been demonstrated in the success of the Guatemalan X West Indian hybrids in Florida and the Guatemalan X Mexican hybrids near Atlixco.

3. Pineapple. A century ago, when pineapple growing was getting a commercial start in Florida, practically nothing was planted here except Red Spanish from Cuban stock. Until the industry folded around 1920, this continued to be the main commercial variety. The phenomenal success of Smooth Cayenne in Australia and especially in Hawaii after 1890, and in more recent years in Puerto Rico, South Africa, and Taiwan, could not be duplicated here. If we add the Queens, Natal and McGregor, we have the three types which account for nearly all commercial production everywhere, although recently Hawaii has been planting increasing acreage of its seedling selections. The above three have existed as cultivars for several centuries.

In this situation, I think Florida has suffered because only a few imported cultivars have been tried, none of which proved very well adapted to our conditions. Back around 1900, Walter T. Swingle and H.J. Webber did some pineapple breeding and reported having 260 seedlings coming on in 1898. One of these might easily have proved a good variety for Florida. Unfortunately, their superiors in Washington did not think highly of the project, and the whole lot was allowed to perish a few years later. It was our misfortune that the cultivars we had seemed satisfactory enough, as the Cayenne long seemed to be in Hawaii, and we have yet to emulate Hawaii in trying to develop varieties better adapted to our conditions.

4. Guava. It is only in the last (70) years that there have been guava cultivars anywhere, as seed propagation was easy and satisfactory for most purposes. There has been no extensive introduction of guava varieties to Florida, although occasionally scions have been imported from India or California. The varieties most esteemed in Florida today are ones developed from seed planted right here.

5. Macadamia. This is a relatively new fruit (nut) in Florida and experience is rather scant still. Many cultivars have been selected in Hawaii in the past (50) years, and several of them have been imported to Florida. So far as I can judge, none has been notably successful here, and I suspect that until we have a thousand or more seedlings to select from, as Hawaii did, we will make little progress toward commercial production.

E. Conclusions.

Now, what about the original question, "Is it better to import established varieties or to import seeds?" I started this study in hopes of finding an answer, but I end it without a very definite reply. In the case of fruits for which no cultivars have been established, the question is academic, and probably most of the fruits in which the Rare Fruit Council is interested are in that class. However, in the case of fruits of which there are available established cultivars, we may well be cautious about limiting our introductions to those cultivars. At the least, we ought to grow their seedlings also. They are very likely to prove poorly adapted to our conditions, having been selected for adaptation to a narrowly defined environment unlike ours.

SEED EXCHANGE

Among my recent correspondence was a letter from John M. Riley, Seed Fund Chairman for the California Rare Fruit Growers, suggesting that our chapter exchange seeds with their organization. This fits very well with the preceding article on introductions. The Californians seem to be quite active in acquiring and exchanging seed. Also, they are quite successful in obtaining seed of unusual species. At the moment we do not have an active seed acquisition and exchange program. I personally would like to see some movement in this area. I am not going to volunteer my services, however, beyond furnishing seed from my own plants. I am busy enough with other chapter duties. Any of you readers interested? I wonder if we have much in the way of useful seed here in our membership. Personally, the best I can do is seed of Cherry of the Rio Grande and Miracle Fruit - and they are from the plants of a friend, not from mine, as mine are not of bearing age yet. And the Californians already have sources of these seeds, anyway. Eventually I shall have Downy Myrtle, Mysore Raspberry, Sugar Apple, Grumichama, Wampi and a very few miscellaneous others. Of course, I forgot, but I do have and already have sent to California seeds of good strains of hermaphroditic papaya. What do you have? This sort of thing is part of what this non-profit, service and education oriented organization is supposed to be about. It is time that we lived up to our charter a bit more actively.

Ray Thorndike
Newsletter Editor

REMEMBER THE PLANT SALE ON THE 17TH AT THE ARMORY AND COME TO SEFFNER ON THE 10TH TO LEARN WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP MAKE THIS THE MOST SUCCESSFUL SALE YET.

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



P. JUDSON NEWCOMBE
314 DEER PARK
TEMPLE TERRACE, FL 33617