



NEWSLETTER

MARCH 1986

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

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE: Bob Heath
Theresa Heath
Arnold Stark
Lillian Stark

NEWSLETTER MAIL ADDRESS: Arnold & Lillian Stark
6305 Eureka Springs Rd.
Tampa FL 33610

PRESIDENT: Arnold Stark CHAPTER MAIL ADDRESS: P.O. Box 260363, Tampa FL 33685
(Including Renewals)

MEETINGS ARE HELD AT 2:00 P.M. ON THE 2nd SUNDAY OF THE MONTH.

NEXT MEETING MARCH 9, 1986

MEETING PLACE COMMUNITY ROOM UNDER WEST RAMP, TAMPA BAY
CENTER SHOPPING MALL, BUFFALO AND HIMES
AVENUES NEXT TO TAMPA STADIUM. (TAKE DALE
MABRY TO BUFFALO AVE., AT STADIUM.)

PROGRAM. JOAN T. BRADSHAW, horticultural/agricultural
agent for the Pinellas County Extension Ser-
vice, will speak on the pruning of fruit trees.
She is a member of the Palm Beach Chapter of
the RFCI, and an authority on tropical foliage
plants. She will have a slide presentation
and a hands-on demonstration if possible. Her
topic should assist us in an area of knowledge
which seems to be largely neglected.

ANNUAL ELECTION

In accordance with the bylaws of our Chapter, we will be electing Board members at our March meeting. We wish to request all members to make an attempt to be at the March meeting for this important event. The nominating committee, consisting of Celso Gomez-Sanchez, Kay Netscher, and Bob Heath, has comprised a slate of members who are willing to serve on the Board for the coming year. At the March meeting, additional nominations from the floor will be accepted. If you are interested in becoming active in your club, please consider a nomination to the Board.

Proposed slate of Board of Directors is as follows:

Bruce Beasor	Kay Netscher
Celso Gomez-Sanchez	Irene Rubenstein
Bob Heath	Paul Rubenstein
Doris Lee	Arnold Stark
Robert E. Lee	Lillian Stark
Armando Mendez	Walter Vines

PLEASE NOTE: ALL of the above people have been on the Board this year; many have been Board members for a number of years. We have had no new volunteers. Considering our recent attrition rate of very active members over the past few years (they suffered from Burnout!), if we don't get some active new blood on the Board, our club may soon be in dire trouble.

For our enjoyment and enlightenment, Chris Rollins brought a great collection of slides from the Fruit & Spice Park in Miami, showing many different kinds of vegetables. The Fruit & Spice Park is a 20 acre botanical garden operated by metropolitan Dade County Park & Recreation Department and is the only park of its kind in the United States. All 20 acres is devoted to tropical fruits, vegetables, spices and nuts, and they have a good selection of all of them. They have 100 varieties of citrus, 35 varieties of bananas, 47 varieties of grapes and so on and so forth, but they are always looking for new varieties. Chris reminded us that if we come across something that they may not have, he would appreciate hearing from us. He mentioned that at the present they are trying to expand their Chinese Oriental persimmon collection.

His first slide showed a group of calabasa pumpkins which we may know as the Cuban pumpkin, even though they are actually grown in many countries. The pumpkins do not have any clearcut characteristics, growing in many sizes and colors. Calabasas are all mixed up genetically, but it is a higher quality pumpkin than that grown in the north, being higher in sugar content and more disease resistant.

Another cucurbit, the chayote, was shown on the next slide. Most people are familiar with it today as it is a commercial product in this area. It may be eaten raw or cooked like a summer squash. It has a very large tuberous root which also may be eaten, which, of course, destroys the vine. It's a perennial vine, which, barring a freeze, will last for as much as 15 years.

The next slide showed a very important Chinese vegetable, which you'll never find in a Chinese restaurant. It is the Chinese bitter melon. It is usually eaten green and it must be cooked because raw it is toxic. It is usually hollowed out and stuffed as we would stuff a pepper, or it is sliced and cooked in stir fry.

The next slide showed the luffa, with which most of us are familiar. It is a squash relative, sometimes called the dish rag gourd. It's easy to grow, a rampant vine and in this area, at least, would be an annual. He also showed us the other kind of luffa which is called Chinese okra. It is ridged, more slender than the common luffa and more palatable. Both may be eaten when very young and tender, cooked similar to squash. The Chinese okra, or angled luffa, is very popular throughout the Orient but you will never find it in a Chinese or Thai restaurant.

The next slide was the casa banana, which showed a fruit about a foot long and 4" in diameter, bright red. It smells and tastes somewhat like a cantaloupe. Seeds are available at the Fruit & Spice Park. The casa banana is a strong growing vine. It grows better on a tree or on a trellis than on the ground.

The next slide showed a bottle gourd, the same family from which we get our gourd bottles, but the one he showed us was an edible variety and very good, growing 15 to 20" long in a slender sausage shape. It is sliced and cooked somewhat like a zucchini. Bottle gourds are among our first cultivated plant. The first containers men used may have been bottle gourds.

The next slide showed a trellis with cucurbits growing on it. This type of trellis which is on poles overhead is excellent for this kind of culture. Chayotes, gourds, squash all grow well on this type of trellis.

The Indian cucumber or ivy gourd was shown on the next slide. The leaves look like English ivy leaves which contributes the name. It grows wild in India but is also cultivated there. It is grown from cuttings, rather than seeds, to preserve the variety, which produces mostly female flowers and as a consequence, fruits very heavy. They are eaten when they are very tender and not allowed to ripen, at which time they turn bright red, because at that point they are too tough to eat. In taste they definitely resemble a cucumber.

The next slide showed something that looked like a very tiny watermelon. It is about an inch long and is called melonette or wild cucumber. It is a native plant of Florida which tastes exactly like a cucumber. It is a great little vegetable and when you become accustomed to looking for it, you'll find it growing wild along canals and streams.

The Chinese winter melon was shown on the next slide and was also available on the table for us to look at. Winter melon doesn't mean that the melon grows in the winter time but simply that it will keep for a long time, like through the winter. This is another of those Chinese vegetables that you'll find in every Chinese home but in no Chinese restaurants. It is cut up into pieces and used in soup. It is also crystallized as a candy.

Next we saw the snake gourd, which will coil up on the ground like a snake ready to strike. It is very slender and will grow up to 5 feet long so you can see why it is called snake gourd. It tastes somewhat like a mild cucumber when it is cooked. Snake gourd is very easy to grow, much easier than cucumbers.

The next slide was a tomato relative called the sticky ground cherry. There are a number of plants in this genus that are cultivated. This particular one is a native to Florida. You'll find it growing wild in the woods. The fruit is surrounded by a paper lantern looking husk. They taste somewhat like a spicy tomato, and they make a very good sauce.

We next saw the tree tomato. It will grow in Florida but it doesn't like it for a minute. It grows high up in the Andes below the frost line where it never freezes but likewise where it never gets hot and it grows best at these intermediate temperatures. It is called a tree tomato because of its form although it is not really a tomato. However, it suffers from all the diseases and problems that tomatoes have and takes three years or more to produce fruit. They do taste quite good and are used mostly in cooking. Oddly enough, New Zealand is the only country in the world that has actively pursued a tree tomato market. They have purple, red and yellow cultivars and they graft their tree tomatoes on a nematode resistant solanum root stock.

The next slide showed the naranjilla which is a commercial crop in the Andes. It is used to produce a drink, a kind of green tomato juice and it is available as a frozen concentrate in Miami and probably other areas. It is a pretty little plant but the leaves are spiny, the stems are spiny and the fruit are covered with a fuzz which protects them from insect damage. But the fruit is extremely seedy and with little pulp and flavor.

Next we saw an Oriental egg plant which is quite different from the big black beauties that we buy in the supermarket. There are several varieties grown in the East which look nothing like the ones we grow here. The Japanese egg plant is long and slender, only an inch and a half or so in diameter, and as much as 6 or 8 inches long. The one grown in Thailand looks more like a large green tomato.

Next we took a look at the potato tree which makes a good nematode resistant root stock on which to graft solanum species. The potato tree can grow up to 30 feet and lives 8 or 10 years here in Florida. It will grow from cuttings which allows you to get root stock for grafting very easily. This is a field that may require considerable research at this point to determine which solanum species can be grafted to the potato tree and the results of this type of union.

Next we saw several slides of different varieties of peppers. There are over 250 varieties of hot peppers and mild peppers.

The next slide was a picture of the okra flower and plant. The okra is related to the hibiscus. The pods of course are eaten when quite young and tender. There are many different kinds of okra, although we in the United States are only familiar with one variety. But throughout the world, many different varieties of okra are grown, some with larger pods and other genetic diversity. He showed us a red variety of okra which is very similar to the green variety that we are familiar with. Nematodes are a very big problem with okra. You could almost use okra as a test plant for detecting nematodes, it is so susceptible. Okra is a good summer vegetable, in that it grows through the summer and bears all through the summer.

Another hibiscus relative is the roselle, or Florida cranberry. Of course it is grown all over the world, not just in Florida. In contrast to the okra, it is the calyx that we use in the roselle for making our cranberry sauce or jelly. It may also be made into a beverage. Red zinger tea is made red with the roselle juice. Pods are harvested in November or December. The calyx is removed and the seed pod is allowed to dry for

removal of the seeds for next year's planting. The calyx may be cooked down to make cranberry sauce or the juice may be extracted to make jelly or a drink.

The next plant we looked at was rice. It is an aquatic plant and the Fruit & Spice Park is preparing to initiate an aquatic section of the garden.

We also saw the snow pea and the yard long bean which is related to the cow pea and the blackeye pea. It is used as a snap bean or pod bean. Then we saw the sword bean. It grows to about a foot in length and is very thick and coarse. Some forms are edible and some forms are not. The bean is like a giant lima bean as big as a half dollar.

Next we saw the pigeon pea which is a staple in Central and South America. It grows well without fertilizer or spraying, grows rapidly and in the fall when the days grow short, it will flower and fruit throughout the winter and spring in the milder climates. It is very cold tender and will not normally stand our cold winters. In tropical climates, the trees live for several years and grow to 8 or 10 feet tall. The peas are very nutritious, nutty like and good flavored.

Next we saw the wing bean growing on an arbor. This bean has been the star of tropical vegetables for the last ten years. It is a staple in Thailand and Southeast Asia. It is a perennial and is a higher source of protein than the soy bean. The dried beans are edible and the seed pods when young and tender are also edible like green beans. The roots are edible and the flowers and tender leaves are edible.

The sweet potato. The slide we saw was an edible leaf sweet potato, grown for its leaves rather than its tubers. Cuttings are available at the Fruit & Spice Park if any of us get down that way.

Mayan spinach. This makes a small tree but it is somewhat tender in Central Florida. The tender leaves are boiled and eaten, similar to spinach. It is believed that this plant contributed to the longevity of the Mayan civilization because of its easy availability and ease of growth. They are very nutritious with lots of iron, vitamins and minerals, but they are also equipped with little nettle thorns which bother some people.

Oxalis, which is a common weed in Florida, was on the next slide. There are about 600 different varieties of oxalis around the world. The leaves contain oxalic acid which gives it a sprightly, sour taste which is excellent in fresh salads.

The yucca or Spanish bayonet is a native plant and the flowers are edible. They may be used in soups or stir fried with other vegetables. The fruit are also edible but they really taste bad.

The malanga. The malanga looks like an elephant ear but the root is a very popular vegetable in Spanish countries as a substitute for potatoes. In south Florida, the growing of malanga is now a multi-million dollar industry. The root is poisonous raw so it must be cooked to be eaten safely.

Casava is another plant which has an edible tuber. It is also an important commercial crop in Dade County. It has a long slender root which is the edible part but like malanga, it also is poisonous until cooked. This is the plant from which tapioca is made. It is propagated by stem cuttings which will grow readily when inserted into the ground.

We next saw the sweet potato which is a relative of the morning glory and has beautiful flowers similar to morning glories. The one we saw has a purple skinned, white fleshed tuber. The flower, stems and leaves are also purple. There are many varieties of sweet potatoes and with many different kinds of flavors. The purple skinned white fleshed sweet potato is a staple crop in south Florida among the Cubans.

The Yam. The yam is an entirely different vegetable from the sweet potato. Only in the United States is a sweet potato called a yam but the yam is really a different vegetable. Yams are an extremely important staple in much of the world. In parts of Africa, the yam is indispensable for the people. They are propagated by planting the aerial tubers which grow on the vine. The tubers are edible when cooked but are of very poor quality. The yam is actually grown for the tubers which frequently

become extremely large. It is very valuable in undeveloped areas because it does not require much care or fertilizer to produce the nourishing tubers. This tuber also is poisonous until cooked so it should not be eaten raw.

There is a close relative of the edible yam that grows in this area called the air potato which is poisonous even when cooked. Actually, some will be poisonous and some will not, but there is no way to tell which ones are. The air potato can be distinguished from the edible yam by the fruit which grows on the vine.

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A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

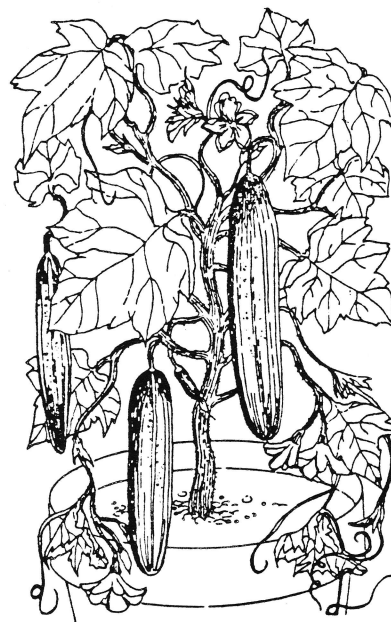
I hope all of you who attended our last meeting enjoyed our program as much as I did. I would like to thank Chris Rollins for an excellent talk, one which is sure to broaden our horticultural horizons. Many of us have been expressing an interest in growing both tropical vegetables and herbs, in addition to our fruit trees, so Chris' talk was invaluable in nurturing this interest. Thanks again, Chris.

I would like to thank all of our members who have been participating in the hospitality table and the plant drawing. Those of you who help provide food and drink, or to serve it, and those of you who bring in plants for the drawing, and purchase tickets to win plants, all help to make our meetings enjoyable as well as informative. Keep up the great participation! To those of you who haven't participated in these activities lately, GET INVOLVED! Your club needs you.

Your Board of Directors has determined that we are consistently functioning at a deficit, on a meeting by meeting basis, especially when the cost of our newsletter is taken into account. In the past year, we have experienced increased costs in printing and postage, and there has also been an increase in the rental fee for our meeting room. Consequently, the Board has voted to offset these increased costs by a modest increase in dues, from the present \$13.00 to \$15.00 per year, beginning this next fiscal year (which starts next month). If you have already paid your dues for this next year, please pay the additional \$2.00 as quickly as possible, so as to bring membership records up to date. If you have not as yet paid dues for this coming year, please do so, as failure to pay dues will result in loss of your valued membership, and discontinuance of newsletter mailings. If you have any questions or comments concerning the Board's action, feel free to voice them at the next meeting.

That's all for now. See you at the next meeting, at which time we will elect the Board of Directors for the coming year. Please be there!

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FEBRUARY PLANT RAFFLE

Plant	Donor	Winner
Yellow Guava	Stark	D. Lee
Yellow Guava	Pearl Nelson	Tom Goldsworthy
Yellow Guava	Pearl Nelson	Roma Vaccaro
Red Cattley Guava	A. Mendez	Connie Vernon
White Sapote	A. Mendez	Pearl Nelson
Lemon Grass	A. Mendez	Bruce Beasor
White Sapote	A. Mendez	Bob Heath
Cactus	Edith Freedman	D. Lee
Naranjilla	RFCI	A. Mendez
Rosemary	RFCI	Bobbie Puls
Governors Plum	Pearl Nelson	Bill Ryland
Cavendish Banana	Seekins	Roma Vaccaro
" "	"	Stan Lachut
" "	"	Al Hendry
" "	"	?
Yellow Guava	Herb Hill	G. Austin
Glycosmos	Bob Heath	Walter Vines
Pomegranate	Herb Hill	Walter Vines
Dorsett Apple	RFCI	A. Mendez
Carambola fruits (Acken)	Chris Rollins	Al Hendry
Ladyfinger Banana	Tom Goldsworthy	"
Plantain	"	"
"	"	Stan Lachut
"	"	C. Gomez Sanchez
"	"	Bob Heath
"	"	D. Lee
"	"	"
"	"	"
"	"	Alice Beasor
"	"	Al Hendry
"	"	Stark
"	"	?
Butia Palm	?	Al Hendry

HOSPITALITY TABLE:

Priscilla Lachut: Jicama, Papaya

Bea Seekins: Cheese Twists, Stuffed Pea Pods, Stuffed Celery, Brandy Kumquat Sauce

Irene Rubenstein: Lemon Pecan Squares

Lillian Stark: Coconut Cubes

Chris Rollins: Jujube, Carambola

Bruce Beasor: Preserved Kumquats, Jellied Guava Paste

Marian Austin: Lemon Squares, Star Fruit Slices

YOUR contributions to the hospitality table are needed for our future meetings.
Please call Priscilla Lachut and volunteer to bring some goodies next month.

* * *

RECIPE OF THE MONTH: LEMON SQUARES (Marian Austin)

Pastry: 1 cup flour $\frac{1}{4}$ cup XXX sugar
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup margarine grated rind of $\frac{1}{2}$ lemon

Mix until smooth and spread in an 8" x 8" square pan (use your fingers!) Bake 15 min. at 350°.

Topping: 2 beaten eggs 3 Tbs lemon juice $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp baking powder
1 cup sugar 1 Tbs flour grated rind of $\frac{1}{2}$ lemon

Stir all ingredients together. Spread on baked pastry. Return to oven and bake 25 min.
at 350°. Cool. Cut into squares. Sprinkle with XXX sugar.

* * *

PINELLAS COUNTY FAIR

The Pinellas County Fair will be held March 26-30, at the Wagon Wheel Flea Market, 7801 - 74th Ave. (Park Blvd.), Pinellas Park. The Fampa RFCI will have a display at the Fair, and members will be able to sell plants (20% to the Flea Market). The hours are Wed. - Fri. 12 - 9 p.m., Sat. - Sun. 9 a.m. - 9 p.m. Admission is free 12-4 p.m., but there is a charge at 4-9 p.m. Entertainment is planned. Our display area is 10' x 10', and will be both covered and secure (guarded and locked). Contact Betty Dickson for any additional information, 522-5147 (St. Pete).

* * *

FLORIDA NATIVE FRUITING TREES No. 6ASHE CHINQUAPIN *Castanea ashei*

Member Beech Family (Fagaceae).

Small tree 18 to 20 feet in height with dense irregularly round crown of large branches on short trunk with smooth ashy-brown bark.

Leaves, alternate, up to 5" long, prominently veined midrib to margin, smooth-margined wedge-shaped base, upper two-thirds sharply toothed to rounding or generally pointed tip, smooth green upper surface with fuzzy grayish underside. Sheds in fall.

Nut-like edible fruit about 1" long in spiny bur, matures in fall.

Often referred to as the Florida Chestnut, is generally found in hammock areas south to central Florida.



* * *

ITEM OF INTEREST FROM THE FLORIDA MARKET BULLETIN:

Officials worried that canker could soon invade Florida's mature citrus groves are reminding Floridians that it is illegal to give or ship homegrown citrus to friends and relatives, whether in-state or out. Only fresh fruit from registered packing-houses with citrus canker compliance agreements can be moved, shipped or mailed.

* * *

What a policeman walks on as he makes his rounds - a beet.

* * *

What game do cucurbits play? Squash.

* * *

What vegetable caused the Titanic to sink - a fresh leek! It was kept on ice.

* * *

If a nut on the wall is called a walnut and a nut on the chest is called a chestnut, what is a nut under the bed? A pecan!

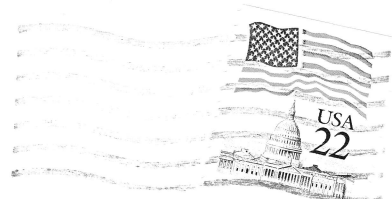
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SOURCES FOR SEEDS AND/OR PLANTS

W.J. Brudy Rare Seeds, 3411 Westfield Drive, Brandon, FL 33511
 W. Atlee Burpee Co., Warminster, PA 18974
 Casa Yerba, Star Route 2, Box 21, Days Creek, OR 97429 (Catalog \$1.00)
 Exotica Seed Co., 1742 Laurel Canyon Blvd., Hollywood, CA 90046 (Catalog \$1.00)
 Henry Field Seed & Nursery Co., Shenandoah, IA 51602
 Herbst Bros. Seedmen, Inc., 1000 N. Main St., Brewster, NY 10509
 Horticultural Enterprises, P.O. Box 340082, Dallas, TX 75234
 J.L. Hudson, Seedsman, P.O. Box 1058, Redwood City, CA 94064
 Le Jardin du Gourmet, P.O. Box 424, West Danville, VT 05873
 Kitazawa Seed Co., 356 W. Taylor St., San Jose, CA 95110
 Johnny's Selected Seeds, Albion, ME 04910
 Mellingers, 2310 W. South Range Rd., North Lima, OH 44452
 Nichols Garden Nursery, 1190 N. Pacific Hwy., Albany, OR 97321
 Northrup King Seeds, Minneapolis, MN 55413; Fresno, CA 93776
 Geo. W. Park Seed Co., Inc., S.C. Hwy 254, N. Greenwood, SC 29647
 Redwood City Seed Co., P.O. Box 361, Redwood City, CA 94064 (Catalog \$.50)
 Sandwich Islands Seed Co., P.O. Box 30125, Honolulu, HI 96820
 Seeds Blum, Idaho City Stage, Boise, ID 83707
 Thompson & Morgan, P.O. Box 100, Farmingdale, NJ 07727
 Tsang and Ma, 1306 Old Country Rd., Belmont, CA 94002
 The Urban Farmer, Inc., 2200 Halburton Rd., Beachwood, OH 44122
 Vermont Bean Seed Co., Way's Lane, Manchester Venter, VT 05255
 Dr. Yoo Farm, P.O. Box 290, College Park, MD 20740

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TAMPA BAY CHAPTER
 RARE FRUIT COUNCIL INTERNATIONAL
 PO BOX 260363
 TAMPA FL 33685



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