



NEWSLETTER

MAY
JUNE 1987

**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: AL HENDRY CHAPTER MAIL ADDRESS: P O BOX 260363, TAMPA FL 33685
(INCLUDING RENEWALS)

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

NEXT MEETING - - - - - MAY 10, 1987

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



LOOK

TAKE I-4 TO EXIT 8 SOUTH, STATE ROAD 579.
GO PAST TRAFFIC LIGHT AT U.S. 92 INTERSEC-
TION. BUILDING LESS THAN 1/2 MILE ON LEFT
(EAST) SIDE OF U.S. 92. USE PARKING LOT.
MEETING ROOM IN REAR OF BUILDING. MAIN
DOOR WILL PROBABLY BE LOCKED. WALK AROUND.

PROGRAM- - - - - INSECT PESTS & PLANT DISEASES, BY GENE
JOYNER, Urban Horticulturist & Extension
Agent I, Palm Beach County. Gene is a very
active member of the Palm Beach Chapter as
well as Miami, and is well known by some
of our members, as he has spoken to our
group several times before.

Fruitfull Fellowship by Arnold L. Stark

Our field trip to Homestead was a complete success! About 20 people (members and guests) attended. Carl Campbell gave us a morning tour of the fruit section of the IFAS Tropical Research and Education Center. In the afternoon, Chris Rollins gave us a tour of the Redlands Fruit and Spice Park. These names may sound familiar to you, because they have both given us programs (and hopefully will again soon!). Even those of us who have been to these places before were excited over seeing huge tropical fruit trees, which make ours look like little bushes. We saw many varieties in flower and/or fruit, and had the opportunity to sample some unusual varieties. Among those we tasted were: jaboticaba, cherry of the Rio Grande, Surinam cherry (black and red), wampee, sapodilla, Garcinia tinctoria, bael fruit, tamarind, cainito (star apple), orangeberry, canistel, rukam, lingaro, sweet lime, Mysore raspberry, and African oil palm nut - truly an ambrosia of a field trip! Eight of us stayed at a small motel in Homestead, and also enjoyed each other's company at dinners and breakfasts. Those of you who missed it.... wish you were there! You'll have another opportunity, however, since this years annual international symposium will be held at the Fruit and Spice Park, in conjunction with their annual tropical fruit fiesta, at the end of July. I hope a substantial group from our chapter will attend. We are scheduled to host the symposium the next year thereafter, and we have much to learn. More about this event at a later date.

NEW WATERMELON & GRAPE VARIETIES FOR CENTRAL FLORIDA

by Dr. Gary Elmstrom, Director of IFAS, Agricultural Research Center at Leesburg

Dr. Elmstrom has spoken to our group twice before but it had been several years since he was here. His talk today was accompanied by interesting slides of the work being done on watermelons and grapes. After Dr. Elmstrom's last visit, we were invited to Leesburg for a special field day for watermelons, which was of great interest and netted the members a variety of delicious melons. This year, there will not be a watermelon field day, but two grape field days are projected. The first one, a bunch grape field day, is scheduled for July 15 and the muscadine grape field day is scheduled for August 26. The program will start in the morning with tasting of grapes and will be followed in the afternoon with discussions and talks. Further information will be forthcoming at a later date.

Dr. Elmstrom is just back from Guatemala and Honduras where he visited a planting of one of their new watermelon varieties, the Mickylee, at Central American Produce Co., and also a planting of some orange fleshed honeydews in Guatemala. In Honduras, they visited a United Fruit Co. trial planting of the orange fleshed honeydew.

IFAS stands for the "Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences" and it's made up of the Agricultural School and the University of Florida and 22 research centers. IFAS has a facility in Leesburg and also in Homestead which some of us will be visiting the 25th of this month. There are six faculty members at the Leesburg facility with one vacancy since their entomologist passed away in July. Dr. Crall, who has been at Leesburg longer than anyone else, is their watermelon breeder and is still going strong with no indication that he is preparing to retire. Dr. Mortensen, their grape breeder, has been there 26 or 27 years, and for most of that time has been involved in the grape breeding program.

Dr. Elmstrom started at Leesburg Center in 1969 as a horticulturist, and he is presently working mostly with squash and cantaloupe. Dr. Elmstrom reminds us that California is by far the most important state in the production of vegetables, with Florida surely in second place. In 1980, 43% of fresh vegetables came from California and about 20% from Florida. Most of Florida's vegetables are on the market in May and June, although some vegetables are available from October through July. Watermelons are a very important part of the crop in the state of Florida, with Florida growing approximately 1/3 of all the watermelons that are eaten in the United States, more than double that of California and almost double that of Texas. Watermelons amount to approximately 6% in value of all the vegetable crops grown in Florida. Other vegetables being worked on in Leesburg are squash, which represents 2.9% and cucumbers at 3.6%. The value of the watermelon crop is approximately \$60 million a year. The value of all the cucurbits take together, watermelon, squash, cucumbers, and cantaloupes, amounts to about \$140 million dollars a year in the state of Florida alone.

An item of interest is that the per capita consumption of watermelons has been going down for the past 25 years; nobody knows exactly why but it is of great concern to the watermelon growers. Another thing of interest concerns the juice drinks you can buy in the supermarket that are indicated to contain 10% fruit juice. The fruit juices may not be orange even though the drink is an orange drink. They are more likely to be concentrated apple juice, pear juice, or cherry juice, or concentrated grape juice. These are used for their sugar content rather than flavor. It may be that the same soluble solids are available from watermelon juice at half the price. If this is true, we may be able to plant watermelon on a lot of those acres up in Lake County and Orange County where citrus trees were lost to the freeze. Approximately 100,000 acres in these counties are covered with dead citrus trees. Also, the concentrating plants are already available. They could be put back in business in less than a year if watermelon concentrate can be economically developed.

The first slide we saw was a picture of the Jubilee Watermelon, which was released in 1963. This is a long striped watermelon with black seeds. All the long striped watermelons with black seeds are Jubilee Watermelons which were

developed in Leesburg and are grown throughout the United States and throughout the world. The Jubilee is one of the most important watermelons on a worldwide basis. Only about 20% of the acreage in Florida is Jubilee but in Mississippi, as an example, about 95% of the melons grown are Jubilee.

The next slide was Smokylee, which was released late in the 1970's from Leesburg. The flesh is of extremely high quality, very sweet and of very good texture. The Smokylee also has a high level of wilt resistance but has a dark green rind which tends to sunburn very badly and the sunburned rind is not attractive to buyers. The other drawback to the Smokylee is the fact that it has white seeds. People will not buy cut watermelons with white seeds because they think they are immature and because of this, it never developed much importance in the watermelon growing world.



The next slide was a variety released recently called Sugarlee. It is an early variety, very sweet and moderately resistant to the wilt but it also hasn't caught on very well. It is a round melon and there is some resistance to round melons in the supermarket. Also they don't stack very well.

The next slide was a melon released in 1979 called Dixielee. It is late maturing and the yield is low but the flesh is very sweet and firm and has a high soluble solids content, but for some reason the Dixielee has not caught on either. Very recently, in the last two years, three new varieties have been released which have apparently caught on very well. The first one is similar in appearance to Charleston Gray and has been named Charlee. It has a very deep red color and is sweeter than the Charleston Gray with a higher level of soluble solids. Also they are very uniform in size and are extremely attractive when sold sliced in the supermarket. The Charlee will probably take over from the Charleston Gray because of its higher quality.

The other two releases are Icebox Melons which means they weigh from 6 to 15 pounds. The two releases look very similar but one is slightly smaller than the other. The smaller one was named Minilee because of its small size, and the larger one, of course, got the name of Mickylee. These have been growing in Central America for the last three or four years in the Dominican Republic, Guatemala and Honduras.

* * *

FROM THE PRESIDENT:

Our May meeting will be held at the Hillsborough County Extension Service office in Seffner, 5339 State Road 579. This is only for May so that the members may see our fruit tree planting at the Center. Many of the trees are in bloom or in fruit. Of course, there is still work to be done and I want you to see that too.

We need to work on membership. Some of our long time, hard working members are leaving and will need to be replaced.

Bring your mothers to the May meeting. It will be a great country outing. All mothers brought by members will receive a free raffle ticket.

COMING EVENTS:

Fruit Societies Annual Conference - July 24, 25 and 26 at Fruit and Spice Park, Homestead, Florida.

* * *

VEGETABLE FIELD DAY

On Wednesday, May 20, 1987, the Bradenton Gulf Coast Research and Education Center of IFAS will hold a vegetable field day, from 9:00 A.M. until 4:00 P.M. This program will present the latest research information on vegetable crops production, moderated by Dr. Don Maynard, who spoke to our club about a year ago. Following a dutch treat picnic box lunch, there will be a tour of the Center's research plots. The GCREC is located on Route 70 between I-75 and 301 (at 70 and Caruso Rd.).

APRIL PLANT RAFFLE

Plant Name	Donor	Winner
Pomegranate	Bob Heath	B. Seekins
Yellow Guava	Bob Heath	Theresa Heath
Atemoya	Bob Heath	Eliason
Abaca Pineapple	Bob Heath	Al Hendry
Barbados Cherry	Betty Dickson	?
Barbados Cherry	Betty Dickson	Standifer
Barbados Cherry	Betty Dickson	Standifer
Papaya	RFCI	Eliason
Papaya	RFCI	Heath
Pomegranate (Granada)	C. Gomez-Sanchez	Eliason
Pomegranate (Granada)	C. Gomez-Sanchez	Standifer
Papaya	RFCI	Al Hendry
Mango	RFCI	Standifer
Loquat	RFCI	Sam Brashear
Stover Grape	RFCI	Al Hendry
Stover Grape	RFCI	Walter Vines

Hospitality Table:

Bea Seekins: Fruit bread with cream cheese and raspberry jam filling

Recipe of the Month: Fried Orange Delight (a winning recipe from the Florida Sunshine Recipe Contest)

1 3/4 cups Florida Orange Juice	Flour
1 package orange cake mix (18 1/2 oz)	Confectioner's Sugar
Florida oranges (about 8)	Flaked coconut

Blend orange juice with cake mix until smooth. Carefully peel oranges by hand, leaving membrane on sections; pull sections apart. Dust orange sections lightly with flour; dip in orange batter, coat well. Fry sections in deep hot fat (350 on a frying thermometer) until golden brown (about 1 minute). Drain on absorbent paper; let cool slightly. Sprinkle with powdered sugar and/or flaked coconut.

Congratulations to Bea Seekins on her Blue Ribbon Winners in the Tarpon Springs Garden Club Show in April.

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

(taken from our May 1981 Newsletter)

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 Chayote and make French fries. And, they will make a better kosher dill pickle than a cucumber. Also, they make good bread and butter pickles.

(Ed. note: Probably most often Chayote is used like yellow summer squash.)

* * *

RUMPLEDGRAPESKIN: A Berry Tale

Once upon a clone, in a vineyard far far away, there grew a wizened old grape vine named Musca. Here is the story Musca tells: "When I was a young sprout, before my first pruning, this land was concord* by the French knight, Sir Blanc Du Bois*. He was no coward*, but was of noble* ancestry and came from Lake Emerald* directly to this Southland* vineyard. He had looked across the water and had said, 'This here is a Blue Lake*.' He thought his triumph* was complete until he met the young Lady Stover*, with whom he fell in love. Her Granny Val* would not permit a marriage between a foreigner from the Green Bunch and her delicate Bronze granddaughter. She wouldn't relent because she was so thick skinned. 'This is the pits,' said the conquistador*, and ran off with Doreen* to the Golden Isles* in Dixie*. When Orlando* seed this, he Jumbo'd* the fence and came to see me on Dog Ridge*. When I heard him, it made me welder* than I was before, and I had to do summit* about it because I also was absolutely magoon* about her. I had to walk over to her house because my carlos* one wheel and I said, 'Suwannee marry me?' 'Wine not,' she answered in her grape drawl. 'Albemarle* you.' We were wed at the annual Higgins* Fry* in Tampa*. We became dairy farmers, raised Liebfraus, and made a good living selling Liebfrau milch. On the day Tona* was born, my friends all said, 'Muscadine with us to celebrate this grape event.' And we all intertwined happily ever after." So that is the end of this tendril love story.

* grape varieties.

* * *

ADDITION TO LIST OF COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN

Seffner Planting - - - - - Al Hendry

The above was inadvertently omitted from the list last month and we certainly do not wish to belittle the importance of this committee. At the next meeting, on May 10, those members who attend will have an opportunity to observe for themselves the extent of development at the Agricultural Center planting and also how much more needs to be done.

NOTICE

The May meeting will be held at the Agricultural Extension Service Building in Seffner instead of at the Tampa Bay Center. However, in June we may be back at Tampa Bay Center.

Come early to the meeting so you may wander through our developing garden. It doesn't rival the Fruit & Spice Park but it is looking pretty good.

You may have noticed that the presentation on watermelons & grapes was lacking in grapes. It seems that in the middle of Dr. Elmstrom's talk the recorder went kaput. So we substituted "A Berry Tale" instead. Very sorry!

* * * * *

Tampa Bay Chapter
Rare Fruit Council Int'l.
P O Box 260363
Tampa FL 33685



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