



NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 1987

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

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(Including Renewals)

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

NEXT MEETING NOVEMBER 8, 1987

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

PROGRAM A SURPRISE: EITHER TOM ECONOMOU WITH HIS
CORNUCOPIA OF TROPICAL FRUITS AND QUIPS,
OR AL HENDRY GOING BANANAS OVER PINEAPPLES
FROM HONDURAS AND OTHER MADCAP TALES.
(For an explanation, come to the meeting!)

* NEW MEMBERS *

The following individuals joined the R.F.C.I. Chapter at the Tree Sale:

Patricia A. Clement, 814 Woodcrest Ave., Clearwater FL 34616 461-5584

Susie & Joe Chang, 7013 W. Linebaugh Ave., Tampa FL 33625 962-3949

Peter O. Montana (ex-charter member), 17302 Tobacco Rd., Lutz, FL 33549 961-3521

Frank Tintera, 8336 W. Forest Cir., Tampa FL 33615 884-1927

Elinor Wilson, 729 - 18th Ave. N., St. Petersburg, FL 894-3017

Gisela Krummel, 11748 Oxford St. N., Seminole, FL 34642 397-5583

Jeanne Condon, 420 Shore Dr. E., Oldsmar, FL 34677 855-0077

Carleton A. Kuppel, 9482 Crestview St., Seminole, FL 34642 393-1765

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EXOTIC FRUIT GROWERS MEETING ANNOUNCED

A public meeting will be held Thursday, November 12, 1987, at 7:30 p.m., at the Fruit & Spice Park to determine if the need exists for an organization of exotic fruit growers, independent of State or local agencies. All interested commercial tropical fruit growers, large and small, are invited to attend.

Areas of discussion will include: financing, crop selection, maintenance, security, marketing and more. Future evolution of this organization will depend on the interest shown at the time of this meeting.

For further information contact Chris Rollins at 247-5727.

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BIG NUMBER 8!

Well, another annual tree sale, our eighth, has come and gone. Time sure does fly when you're having fun! Results are not yet in for an official tally, but I feel it is safe to say that this sale, although not setting any new records for us, was definitely a success! Not only did we gain the funds necessary to support our organization for another year, but we accomplished this with a great spirit of cooperation and participation from a very large proportion of our membership. Here is a list of those members who worked at least one half day Saturday or Sunday (many worked both days): Abe & Edith Friedman, Pearl Nelson, Kay & Ed Netscher, Harold & Bea Seekins, Bobbie Puls, Marian Zieg, Jim & Joan Murrie, Harry & Sandy Klaus, Bill Ryland, Romagene Vaccaro, Betty & Avery Dickson, Walter Vines, Arnold & Lillian Stark, George Merrill, Gloria Obiena & Vincent Magaway, Mike Judd, Fran & Joe Stevens, Tom Goldsworthy, Celso & Daniel Gomez-Sanchez, Herb Hill, Bruce Beasor, Ellie Wilson, Al Hendry & Kay Tanaka, Anthony Gricius, Lloyd & Lottice Shipley, Armando & Felicia Mendez, Robert Eliason, Elizabeth MacManus, Helen Cornwell, Glen Myrie, George Riegler, Jud Newcombe, Linda Lee, Nels Gullerud, Louis Alarcon, Bill & Nancy Lester, Bob, Terry & Vic Heath, Paul & Irene Rubenstein, and Harry & Carol Snyder. This is about 50% of our membership, which is certainly a good turnout. If I omitted anyone, I apologize; next time, please sign the roster. Prior to the sale, Tom Hughes obtained our plant labels for us. Lewis Maxwell graciously presided at a "Meet the Author" and information table during the sale.

Present and past members who donated plants and/or fruit included ALbert Greenberg, Harold Seekins, Ray Thorndike, Bruce Beasor, Armando Mendez, Glen Myrie and George Riegler; those selling plants and/or fruit included Harold Seekins, Bob Heath, Arnold & Lillian Stark, Ray Thorndike, Bruce Beasor, Harry & Carol Snyder, Armando Mendez, Elizabeth MacManus and Betty Dickson.

Commercial suppliers included Ray Green, Drew Smith, Harry & Carol Snyder, Larry Fisher, W.C. Colson, Leo Cetuk and Peggy Kenney. Again, if I omitted anyone, please forgive this oversight. Please notify me so we can include a supplemental list in the next newsletter. To all of you, a sincere thank you for making our sale a success. Another benefit of the sale is the addition of 8 new members of our organization. To each of you, a hearty welcome!

* * *

TREE SALE STORAGE

All of the grocery carts, about 80, all of the tree signs, the wooden bases and supports, and the large Florida Fruit sign, are presently stored in Riverview, at Bob Heath's brother's 40 acre farm. All of the material is in a quonset hut supplied by Bob Heath. On Saturday, the set-up day, George Riegler, Victor Heath, Bruce Beasor, Al Hendry & Bob Heath brought the 80 carts from Riverview to the fairgrounds.

On Monday, George, Victor and Bob Heath in their three pickup trucks and Al Hendry, returned the 80 carts plus the signs and stands to Riverview, and many left-over trees to Bob Heath's house, where they will be used for the raffles at future meetings. In addition, some supplies such as tablecloths, paper cups, etc., are being stored at Bob Heath's house. Unsold books and pamphlets left over from the book sale are being stored by Linda Lee. Supplies and equipment needed for the check-out and cash receipts, are being stored by the Rubensteins'. Additional trees for the raffle are being stored at the Starks'. We believe this constitutes the majority of materials being stored for next year's sale. If anyone else has materials being stored, please let us know so that we may make a record of same.

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(From the July 1981 Newsletter)

THE WHITE SAPOTE
(*Casimiroa edulis*)

Also known as the Mexican Apple, Matasano or plain Casimiroa, this medium size evergreen tree is native to the Mexican and Central American highlands. Although in the Rutaceae family, the White Sapote is not in the same subfamily, Aurantioideae, as citrus, but in the subfamily next to it, Toddalioidae. Thus, it is not close enough to citrus to hybridize or be graft-compatible with any of its species. Like citrus, however, Casimiroa contains an aromatic turpentine-like substance. The use of the name sapote is unfortunate, since it has no relationship to the true sapotes in the family Sapotaceae. Neither is there any relation to the so-called Black Sapote, which is a persimmon relative in the family Ebonaceae. The White Sapote, accordingly, would be better served by the use of its generic name, Casimiroa.

Sometimes erect, but usually of spreading form to thirty feet (10 m) in height and to thirty feet in width, Casimiroa trees should be planted at least twenty feet (6 m) apart. The irregular branches have glossy green, palmately compound leaves with five to seven leaflets. It makes a good ornamental subject. Although it is evergreen, in California there may be a period of complete leaf fall in May or June or even earlier should there be frost enough to cause much leaf abscission. The thick gray bark is rough and covered with conspicuous lenticels (small whitish excrescences).

The abundant flowers, small and pale green, are borne in panicles of 15 to 100 or more. In Central Florida, flowering normally occurs from November to March and to some extent throughout the year, especially on girdled wood. In California, blossoming occurs mainly from spring to midsummer.

Being self-fertile, even lone Casimiroa trees can be prolific bearers. Literally hundreds of fruits may mature on select trees. In Florida, fruits begin maturing in May. The harvest begins in September in California. Fruit size is variable, from one to four inches (2.5 to 10 cm) in diameter, or from tomato to orange size in range. When ripe, fruit color is green in some varieties, and in others is yellow, golden, or perhaps having a streak of bright orange or yellow. The inedible skin is very thin and, when ripe, easily torn. The off-white to yellow flesh is soft and buttery, agreeably sweet in the better varieties, but with a slight resinous (bitter) or turpentine flavor that characterizes the fruit. This flavor may be excessive in a few varieties, making it objectionable to some palates. The "Dade" variety, among others, seems to lack this bitter characteristic. There are from one to six rather large oval or elliptical seeds embedded in the center of the fruit. Historically, the raw seeds have been regarded as poisonous, but have been used in medicinal preparations.

Rich in vitamins C and A, the Casimiroa is a dessert or salad fruit to be eaten fresh. A sweet preserve has been made of it, but never achieved much note. Also rich in carbohydrates and proteins, Casimiroa fruit is ranked (pound for pound) next to the banana, date and fig for food value. With cream and sugar, a good variety will perhaps surpass the banana in flavor and texture.

The fruit may be picked when mature, but not fully ripe, as it will then ripen indoors with little loss in flavor, usually in about five to eight days. If left to ripen on the tree, it will drop, damaging or destroying the fruit. It can be exploited commercially if the fruit is picked early while still green and hard and then shipped rapidly to arrive before softening.

Definitely subtropical in climatic requirements, the Casimiroa has been successful in southern and central Florida and also southern California. It seems to be as hardy as most citrus, but less so than Satsuma and Kumquat. The tree and foliage will stand at least as much cold and frost as Guatemalan avocado varieties. Tip damage and loss of young leaves may occur with a few degrees of frost. A hard freeze may defoliate the

entire tree, but regrowth is very rapid in either case. Killing temperatures have not been published or studied extensively, but the central Florida freezes of January 1977, March 1980 and January 1981 were not fatal. Even the record setting lows of December 1962 were merely damaging.

Unfortunately for central Florida growers, the normal blossoming season coincides with the freeze danger period. In California the frost danger is usually past before the flowers open. Winter freezes, however, may damage the young inflorescences before they are easily seen. Re-flowering is easily induced by girdling in any season.

Casimiroa trees grow vigorously in the coastal districts of Southern California where the mean temperature from April through October is about 65 degrees F. (18 C.). They do not, however, tolerate the cooler conditions (57 to 58 F. or 14 C.) of the San Francisco Bay area. Cool dry winters seem to induce a better dormancy and to improve the fruit set.

The Casimiroa or White Sapote is most content in a slightly acid, rich loamy soil. Alkaline soils cause severe mineral deficiencies. A generous amount of compost should be added to planting holes in deep sandy acid soils. With good drainage it can be grown on clays. Low wet soils discourage fruiting. Nitrogen fertilization requirements seem to be average, but not as strict as for the orange. Young trees need plentiful water for rapid growth. The mature tree is drought resistant, but responds to irrigation like citrus. Watering should be limited during dormancy, however. Unlike citrus, mulching is recommended in order to improve soil moisture retention and to decrease weed competition, especially in the case of young trees.

Seedlings do not come true to the parent, so select varieties of Casimiroa are propagated by grafting, budding and air layering. Seedlings usually require six or more years to bear fruit. Due to the short period of viability, seeds must be planted soon after removal from the fruit. Plant one inch deep in a light porous soil mix. Germination takes three to four weeks. If seedlings are to be grown to maturity, the terminal bud should be removed before the plant reaches three feet in height. Otherwise the tree may grow ten feet or more before branching. Three or four laterals should be encouraged and they, in turn, should have their terminal buds removed when one to two feet in length. Vegetatively propagated trees also should be headed back in this manner upon planting.

Shield budding, as is practiced on avocados, is one common method of vegetative propagation. The seedling understock should be about 3/8 inch in diameter (1 cm) at the base. Branch ends of fairly mature wood which have acquired the ash-gray coloration, ^{and} suitable for budwood. Spring and summer are the best times for most active growth. At mid-summer, when the cambium is very active, topworking can be performed using the side bark graft. The scion may be growing within three weeks.

Another variety or species (*C. tetrameria* in some literature) is referred to as the Woolyleaf White Sapote. It has larger leaves with soft pubescent undersides. The fruit of the propagated varieties of Woolyleaf White Sapote or Matasano is considered by some to be superior to that of the smooth leaf varieties. The Matasano fruits are larger, generally with fewer seeds, giving proportionally more flesh. They may approximate grapefruit in size.

Deserving of more widespread use as a dooryard fruit, Casimiroa species also need more study and development. Being evergreen, of medium size, relatively hardy, and a good ornamental subject, the Casimiroa or Matasano should fit into most any landscape. It also has much potential as a pot plant (tub culture) and as an espalier specimen.

R. S. Thorndike

The following article was taken from The Tampa Tribune, Business Section, October 26, 1987, by Mary Lou Janson.

LIME BLIGHT SPREADS TO OTHER CITRUS

Lakeland - A problem that has been slicing lime production in this state for four years is starting to spread to citrus groves in South Florida.

Lime growers in Collier, Lee and Dade counties have been battling unusually high flower and fruit losses from lime plants since 1983. That area produces about 90 percent of the nation's limes.

Now orange and grapefruit growers are seeing some of the same symptoms in their groves.

"Lime growers have faced the post-bloom fruit drop situation for the past four years. This year, for the first time, we are noticing it in round oranges and grapefruit," said Charlie Matthews, a citrus extension agent in Immokalee. "Navel orange blocks especially are seeing significant reductions of yields. It may be as high as 50 percent. It's kind of spooky."

The threat posed to citrus production is serious considering sales add up to more than \$1 billion a year, the most recent state-wide figures show. According to 1985 totals, Florida's orange crop was valued at \$878.6 million and grapefruit at \$231.9 million. Lime sales totaled \$20.1 million that year.

Researchers are baffled by what is causing as much as 80 percent of the flowers and young limes, about the size of a fingernail, to fall prematurely from plants in some orchards. Typically, about 20 percent of the blooms and fruit that appear on plants fail to reach maturity.

"We are still trying to ascertain if this is a fungus or an insect problem. The jury is still out," said Matthews.

To date, scientists have collected eight different types of fungi and one insect from infected citrus. It is not clear which of those, if any, is the culprit.

"It's kind of bewildering," said Dr. Carl Campbell, a professor of horticulture based at the University of Florida's Tropical Research and Education Center in Homestead. "There is no simple answer to this."

Campbell said the same type of problem has surfaced in countries with tropical climates but had not been detected in this state before 1983. Scientists turned their attention to the plant problem after lime growers detected a high rate of fruit and flower loss.

Two plant pathologists and an entomologist are trying to find the cause and cure for the problem but estimate about \$100,000 a year is needed to cover research costs, he said.

Lime growers already are contributing \$70,000 a year for a three-year period. A plea for an additional \$30,000 was made at a recent meeting of the Florida Citrus Research Advisory Council. Council members agreed to pass along the request to the Florida Citrus Commissioners at next week's meeting.

"We've done a lot of work already," Campbell said. "But the problem appears to be spreading and if the last year and a half are any indication, it is going to get worse."

The potential impact on orange and grapefruit production is significant since groves have moved closer to lime production sites. That southward shift came about after a series of freezes severely cut back the state's orange and grapefruit crop. While lime production dipped the first year the problem came to light - falling from 1.7 million 88-pound boxes during the 1982-83 season to 1.44 million boxes the following season - increased plantings have helped to offset further declines, agriculture officials explained. The latest forecast shows the 1987-88 lime crop will climb to 1.7 million boxes, growing 10% from last season's 1.45 million boxes. "We are still trying to assess what the economic impact of this is and what types of reduction we are really seeing," Matthews added. Meanwhile, scientists are simply advising citrus growers to maintain their normal spray programs that are used to control fungi that typically attack their plants. "I am afraid we don't yet have any adequate recommendations," Campbell said.

THE RAVING by Eggplant Apple Pome

Once upon a weekend sunny,
 Trees were brought to sell for money,
 By the members and suppliers who could get them through the door
 Presently there came a spectre
 Said he was the plant inspector
 Here to check the many plants collected on the Arm'ry floor,
 Only this and nothing more
 Citrus canker, nevermore!
 Ah, distinctly we remember.
 It was the month before November **
 We hope that each and every member helps with what we're working for.
 Gradually a large crowd gathered
 All the carts were geared and lathered *
 Then the crowd began to holler, "Come on, let us in the door!"
 "Please open up the Armory door!"
 Only this and nothing more.
 Through the trees the crowd came sweeping
 Running, jumping, even leaping.
 For a fond and loving effort to buy the plant they did adore.
 In the intervening hours
 Plants were bought with fruits and flowers
 Fruit was tasted, questions answered and from the experts, even more.
 When the crowd at last departed
 None of us were broken hearted
 Even though the trees remaining seemed as many as before
 It was fun we must agree
 We'll breathe a sigh before we flee, "My aching back" next year--- encore!
 Next October it's encore
 Citrus canker, nevermore!

* Don't complain, it rhymes, doesn't it?

** Or the month after September if you wish.



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