



# NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 1987

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

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(INCLUDING RENEWALS)

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

NEXT MEETING - - - - - DECEMBER 13, 1987

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



TAKE I-4 TO EXIT 8 SOUTH, STATE ROAD 579. GO  
PAST TRAFFIC LIGHT AT U.S. 92 INTERSECTION.  
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- - - - - "PLANT BREEDING & HYBRIDIZING" by Dr. Jude  
Grosser. Dr. Grosser is a horticulturist  
and citrus hybridizer at IFAS experiment  
station in Lake Alfred, Florida. He is  
responsible for the difficult cross of Sweet  
Orange with Severina Buxifolia to produce a  
promising citrus rootstock. His talk should  
be very interesting to all who are interested  
in fruiting trees of all kinds.

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We regret to inform you of the passing of long time friend and RFCI member,  
Nick Acrivos this past month.

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LETTER FROM TOM REESE, past President Palm Beach chapter RFCI to Tampa Bay Chapter RFCI:

Reading your Tampa Newsletter for October this morning I find that members  
are having a difficult time with the whitefly infestation.

I experienced this condition on my papayas off and on and found that the easy  
way to eliminate these rascals is to secure a strip of plywood, thin and light.  
Cut is into pieces, drill a hole in it. Paint it with a bright yellow paint,  
both sides, and cover it with Tanglefoot, both sides. You can secure this tangle-  
foot at A.M. Leonard, Inc., 6665 Spiker Road, Piqua, Ohio, 45356. TGFI 1# can,  
\$4.15 TREE TANGLEFOOT, the insect barriers.

They will send you a catalog at the time they send the tanglefoot. Spread  
this thinly on each side of the painted board and hang it near the trouble spot,  
and goodby, white fly.

Sincerely,  
Tom Reese

## PINEAPPLE &amp; BANANA GROWING IN CENTRAL AMERICA

by Al Hendry

Al Hendry, our president, presented an interesting slide presentation of his trip to Honduras last September. The area where they landed and spent most of their time is almost due south of the Mobile, Pensacola area. Al indicated that they did not see a lot of exotic fruits and vegetables in Honduras but mostly the common tropical fruits that you see in the markets, such as pineapples, papayas, bananas and such. In Honduras at the experiment station that they visited, a breeding program is underway to breed a good commercial banana resistant to Panama Disease. Panama Disease is a soil borne disease for which there is no cure, and which causes rotting within the stalk. The banana plantations of a few years back have been devastated by this disease and the common banana of 20 years ago is no longer being raised. The banana now being grown on the plantations is the Valerie. The banana breeders are also attempting to breed a resistance to the leaf spotting disease which is common in banana plantations. Al presented a slide which showed both of these diseases and their effect on the banana plants. Another slide showed several stalks of different kinds of bananas which were very interesting in their arrangement on the stalk. Banana breeding, of course, has many problems because of the lack of seeds in the bananas. Hybridizing bananas is really a difficult task because of this factor. But by crossing different banana varieties and sifting through tons of bananas, they manage to find a few seeds. They are striving for high production, large size, flavor and the shipping and lasting qualities of the fruit. Getting all of these attributes in a single plant is a time consuming process.

Al next showed us a slide of a stalk of bananas with the female flowers at the top from which the bananas form, and the male flowers which fertilize the female flowers at the end of the stalk

The next slides showed a banana plantation with an overhead trolley between the rows of banana trees. Bananas are cut from the trees and placed on the trolley where they are transported overhead to the processing plant. This is an attempt to decrease the bruising of bananas which, as we know, are very tender.

They also encase the stalks of bananas in plastic bags while they are on the trees, which Al explained is for cold protection, not that it gets that cold in Honduras, but any temperature below 55° tends to stop the formation of the fruit.

Bananas require extensive use of fertilizer to produce fruit, but in this particular plantation that we were viewing, only nitrogen is added to the soil because the other elements are in great abundance in this soil.

In order to support the banana stalk, which frequently will collapse with the weight of the stalk of bananas if they are not supported, they use an overhead cable with a rope to each stem. They used to use bamboo poles to support the bananas but this practice has gone out of style because the locals tend to steal the poles at night.

The next slides showed the packing plant which is right at the edge of the field. The bananas are cut into hands and packed in boxes where they are hauled off immediately to the port for shipping to northern markets.

Al and his group next went down to the Port of Tela to visit a palm oil plantation. The fruit of the oil palm grows on a stalk somewhat similar to the queen palm or *cocoplumosa*. The stalks are hauled to a pressing plant where the oil is expressed from the kernels of the fruit. The oil is a saturated oil and it is extensively used in vegetable oil preparations but is not desirable for those folks who are concerned about high cholesterol levels in their blood.

Al next showed us some slides of the local tropical gardens which were started by Popenoe back in the 20's. The Gardens are now run by the Honduran government and by the Forestry Department. The park had deteriorated some years back and had almost gone back to jungle when the Honduran government took over. Since then it has been

cleared and put back into reasonable shape with the help of a couple of American Peace Corps volunteers. It is certainly a beautiful place and the Rare Fruit Council in Miami is devoting some effort to maintaining these gardens. The gardens contain an extensive planting of mangosteens, perhaps the largest in the world. But unfortunately for Al, there were no fruit at that time and likewise, all the durians were immature.

He also showed us a couple of slides of nutmeg, which was growing there in the gardens. Around the outside of the hard nutmeg nut is a red pulp which is the spice called mace. It is removed and dried for production and the nutmeg itself is ground for the spice we all know so well.

Cacao is also grown in Honduras, mostly by small farmers, and breadfruit is also grown there.

The next slide was a keppel or keppel apple which is also grown quite extensively. At one time, only royalty was allowed to eat it because it is said that all the body wastes smell like violets after you eat the keppel, but Al made no attempt to verify this.

Al next showed us a slide of talipot palm in full bloom. The tree is 35 to 40 years old and this is the first time it has ever bloomed. It takes the tree 35 to 40 years to reach bearing age and then it produces a tremendous abundance of seeds and after this spectacular performance, promptly dies. At this point, you cut the tree down and start all over again.

We next saw some slides of pineapple plantations. There are many small farms growing pineapples as well as large plantations but all the pineapples there are sold as fresh fruit. None of them are converted into canned pineapples. Some of those you may see in the markets with Dole pineapple labels are grown right there in Honduras. The soil in the plantations is turned down to 24" and the pineapple plants are grown for three years. In three years you get two pineapples, and then they disc the whole plantation and start over. The interesting things about the plantations there are the labor, management arrangements. The company that grows the pineapples hires only management personnel as individuals. The laborers who work in the fields belong to a separate company and these companies bid on the work and work for the owners of the pineapple companies as a labor company. In addition to this, the land is owned by the Honduran government and is leased out to the pineapple growers. For this reason, the pineapple grower has virtually no investment in his farms. The laborers all work for themselves in a cooperative company and are not under the direct control of the pineapple growers and the land cannot be bought up by large land owners as it belongs to the government. It seems to be a very workable arrangement in Honduras. The pineapples in this pineapple plantation were the smooth cayenne variety without any thorns on the leaves.

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#### NOVEMBER PLANT RAFFLE

<u>Plant Name</u>	<u>Donor</u>	<u>Winner</u>
Carambola (5)	Bruce Beasor	Frank Tintera
Carambola	Bruce Beasor	James Murrie
Carmabola	Bruce Beasor	Robert Eliason
Becky Blue Berry	Bob Heath	Johnny Perez
Orlando Seedless Grape	Bob Heath	Robert Eliason

#### HOSPITALITY TABLE:

Pearl Nelson: Persimmon Cake & Chocolate Cake  
Bruce Beasor: Banana Bread

#### RECIPE OF THE MONTH: Calamondin Marmalade (from "Tropical Fruit Recipes", RFCI, Miami)

4 lb. calamondin    2-1/2 lb. sugar    6 oz. liquid pectin

Wash fruit in warm, soapy water and rinse well. Cut in half and remove seeds. Chop or puree fruit in a blender. Cook fruit over medium high heat until mixture thickens. Add sugar and cook 15 minutes longer. Add pectin, remove from heat, ladle into sterile canning jars and seal.

## TROPICAL FRUIT SEMINAR

The 6th International Tropical Fruit Seminar will be held at the Los Angeles Arboretum in California, and will be hosted by the California Rare Fruit Growers, Inc. The inclusive dates are July 6-12, 1988. For further information, contact our president, Al Hendry.

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## GROWERS' REPORTS

Arnold & Lillian Stark have had a bumper crop of chayotes from one vine this season. If you have any recipes for chayotes, please let them know.

Bob & Theresa Heath's carambola tree has recovered from the past freezes and has blessed them with an abundance of fruit, nice, star shaped things which they will be glad to give away before the crop is finally all consumed.

\* \* \*

## FREEZE PROTECTION FOR PLANTS by Will Unruh (taken from Jan. 1986 Newsletter)

With so many past winters of damaging freezes, let's hope we're going to get a freeze-free one for a change. However, just in case it doesn't work out that way, I'd like to share some successful experiences in protecting tender plants from hard winter freezes. These successes are based on application of the principle used in the patented protectors our group sold last winter.

That the principle works was amply shown by its success in protecting a newly planted citrus grove near our home during last January's freeze. The grove had been completely equipped with these same protectors just before the freeze. With warm weather's arrival it was clear the owner had made a good investment... the small trees survived the freeze beautifully!

I had similar good results applying this protector's principle in home-made form to numerous plants. The protector's principle uses the high heat of fusion and heat capacity of water. This means that a relatively large amount of heat must be removed from water for it to freeze and furthermore, until a given container of water is completely frozen, its temperature doesn't go below 32°F. The commercial protector includes two slender containers of water inside the insulator next to the plant's trunk. The insulation slows down the heat loss from the air around the plant's trunk to the cold outside air, and the water volume keeps it from going significantly below freezing as long as there is still unfrozen water in the containers.

This same principle can be applied easily to other plants which don't have size or trunk shapes for which the commercial protector was designed. All you need is containers of water right next to the plant, free space for the air to circulate between the plant and the water containers, and an insulating covering over the whole business to slow down the heat loss as much as possible. The containers of water are almost like local heaters with their thermostats set at 32°F. The good thing about "doing your own" this way is that one can partially compensate for poor insulation in the covering (e.g. blankets vs. styrofoam in the commercial unit) by including more water next to the plant.

The water can readily be put next to the plant using any of a number of convenient forms such as buckets, plastic milk jugs, 2-liter plastic soft drink containers, jerry jugs, etc. The larger the volume of water used, the better. The container used should not have insulating walls since good heat transfer between the water and the surrounding air is needed. The milk jugs and 2-liter containers have shapes which conveniently permit tying them along



the plant trunk or on supporting stakes to provide better protection farther up in the plant. Note that the water must be in containers - just watering the ground is relatively ineffective since the water then can't exchange heat with the air easily.

In summary:

1. Put lots of water in containers right next to the plant - the more the better.
2. Cover the plant and water as best you can to both provide insulation and minimize air flow between inside and outside.

It works! During last January's hard freeze, I had a small pummelo tree and a key lime tree struggling back from the previous year's freeze. Both had new very soft shoots which snuggled up to their jugs of water under insulating blankets and kept comfortable. They survived the freeze without the slightest damage and kept right on growing!

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### A CHRISTMAS CAROL

(Sung to the tune of "Rudolph, the Red Nosed Reindeer")

You know oranges, apples, bananas, and peaches  
Strawberries, blueberries, longans and lychees.  
But will you recall the fruit trees  
You once had this fall.

Cause if central Florida freezes  
All of our rare fruit trees die  
While we sit around with sneezes  
And with a tear in our eye.

All of our poor annonas,  
Guavas, carambolas, too,  
If sitting in the garden,  
All of them a-turning blue.

So if Roy Leep's\* telling you,  
Frost or freeze in sight,  
Run right out and ask your trees,  
"Would you like a wrap tonight?"

Then maybe you can save them,  
And they'll grow up big and tall.  
But if this year's like many other,  
You'll buy them all again next fall!\*\*

\* WTVT weather forecaster

\*\* At our next year's tree sale, of course!

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### NOTICE

THE DECEMBER MEETING WILL BE HELD AT THE AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICE BUILDING IN SEFFNER INSTEAD OF AT TAMPA BAY CENTER.

Excerpt from May 1981 Newsletter, by Ray Thorndike:

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

The first commercially successful chayote plantation in the U.S. was started by Hardy Laymond in 1965. 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 graded cheese in the casserole dish.

You can thin slice chayotes 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. A suggestion: Cube them and steam them. Then pan fry with butter and a lot of garlic.)

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*Warmest greetings  
of the Season  
and every good wish  
for the Coming Year*