



# NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 1988

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

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(Including Renewals)

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

NEXT MEETING - - - - - DECEMBER 11, 1988

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

Take I-4 to Exit 8 South, State Road 579;  
go past traffic light at U.S. 92 intersec-  
tion. Building is 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- - - - - AL HENDRY recently returned from the  
Meeting of the Inter-American Society of  
Tropical Horticulture in Santa Monica,  
Columbia. He will talk about his trip and the  
activities of the Society and spice it up with  
slides of Columbian gardens and markets.

NEW MEMBERS: Van & Lieu Nguyen, 3408 W. Sligh Ave., Tampa FL 33614, 935-4916.

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Soil pH is the logarithm of the reciprocal of the hydrogen ion concentration and is usually expressed in units from 0 to 14. 7 is neutral, above 7 is basic or alkaline, and below 7 is acidic. The proper pH is important to plant growth and determines the availability of certain nutrients to plants. Each plant has its preference of pH. Blueberries and azaleas, for instance, prefer very acid soil. You should know the pH of your soil and how to correct it to a proper level to suit the plants you intend to grow.

A soil test can be done at your County Extension Service office or at some garden centers. To test your soil, take several core samples from the area you intend to plant. Dig 2-6 inches deep. Mix the samples thoroughly in a clean container. Take about a pint of this mixture to the Extension office for the test. The cost is \$1.00 per sample. Bring your test samples to our meetings and I will have them tested. You will be advised of any corrective measures necessary.

A new "Manual of Minor Vegetables" is available from IFAS University of Florida. A brief discussion of each vegetable includes its description, history, climatic adaptations, cultural requirements, and common uses with growing tips for Florida gardens. The cost is \$3.18. I will have order forms at the next meeting. This is a good chance to learn about wax gourd, poke weed, cardoon, celtuce, dasheen, rakkyu, jicama, kang kong and many other tasty, useful and nutrient rich vegetables not usually available in your supermarket.

Al Hendry

## PINEAPPLES, BANANAS & PAPAYAS

John Burns and his wife have been growing fruits and vegetables for quite some time, concentrating mostly on papayas, bananas and pineapples. He began his talk by discussing the bad effects that drugs and cooked foods had on his body while he was in the service. The Navy put him on the drugs streptomycin and penicillin, which destroyed all his stomach bacteria and severely interfered with his metabolism. He cited a number of examples of the affect that cooked foods without any fruit and fresh vegetables has on the human body and the body of other mammals. So when they bought their present house so many years ago, they planted an extensive vegetable garden and then for their own consumption, began to plant bananas and papaya trees because they believed in the healthful qualities of fresh fruits and vegetables. At the time they had a beautiful lawn in the front, which they had to cut every two or three days to keep it under control, but as time went on, the papayas and banana trees have shaded out their lawn and even most of their vegetable garden, so that now they have no lawn at all, just a jungle of papayas and bananas and pineapples, and even the pineapples are having a real problem getting enough sun.

Mr. Burns and his wife now have many varieties of papaya and bananas, and they are selling some of the fruit and banana and papaya plants. It has taken them a while to learn the secrets of growing bananas and papayas but now they have a few of these secrets to pass on.

About once a month, you can water your bananas with sea water, mixing a half gallon of sea water with five gallons of fresh water. You may also spray with a liquid seaweed. It comes from Norway originally but it's available by the case in Illinois, where Mr. Burns buys it. The fertilizer he uses is Fertrell, which is a mixture with some 14 or 15 ingredients, including items such as granite dust, bone meal, castor pumice, cottonseed meal, sea products, leather tankage, chicken manure, soya bean meal, oyster meal, green sand, etc. He recommends using a completely organic fertilizer and fertilizing bananas at least once a month. Bananas and papayas both require a lot of nourishment and bananas require a lot of moisture.

Mr. Burns was very emphatic about bananas, saying that bananas must have organic fertilizer, not "should have" or "prefer", but must have organic fertilizer. So those of us who are trying to grow bananas should keep this in mind. Most people are starving their bananas, trying to grow them in Florida sand and without fertilizer and too little water.

Mr. Burns showed us a number of slides taken of his yard and the overgrown appearance of the bananas and papaya trees and the pineapple. They have four varieties of pineapple which they grow, Smooth Cayenne, Spanish Red, Abaca and the Natal Queen. Mr. Burns also suggested cultivating lizards, tree frogs and green frogs for control of insects, the frogs eating the night insects and the lizards eating the day insects.

The Burns have about 12 different varieties of papayas, most of which came from the Philippines. Mrs. Burns brough some fruit to show us, beautiful fruit, 6 or 8 inches long, which she indicated was only one variety of the 12 or more that they raise. Some are long and slender, some are round like a grapefruit, some are pear-shaped, some are football shaped. They come in all shapes and sizes, from a couple pounds, up to 12 pounds or so. When they turn yellow and become a little soft, they are ripe and ready to eat as a dessert fruit. However, she emphasized that the green fruit could be eaten as a vegetable. Peel the papaya and seed it and cut it into small bite size pieces, then saute it with garlic, onions and tomatoes and sometimes a little soy sauce, and cook it until the papaya becomes tender. You may also cook it with cut up bacon and onions as you might do with yellow squash. This could be critical where you have green papayas on the tree

when a freeze is predicted. Rather than allow them to be destroyed by the freeze, you may pick them green and store them in the refrigerator for a short period of time and use them as a vegetable.

#### Additional Information:

Pineapples. *Ananas comosus*. Originally from Brazil and Paraguay, may be grown in the ground or in three gallon containers which may be brought in during a freeze. Fruit develops in floescence at the end of the stem and consists of many small seedless fruit fused together. Size varies from 1 to 10 lbs. or more depending on variety. It may fruit any time throughout the year and takes 12 to 18 months to produce fruit from planting. The fruit should ripen on the plant for maximum flavor and sugar content. In Florida, the pineapple is strictly a dooryard fruit, not suitable for large scale commercial production. As the fruit develops, it should be tied up to a stick to prevent the fruit falling over. Propagation is by vegetative growth from the mother plant. There are four general types: slips, which arise from the stalk below the fruit; suckers, which originate at the axle of leaves; crowns, which grow from the top of the fruit; and ratoons, which come out from underground portions of the stem. Slips and suckers are the preferred planting material, especially if they are large and vigorous. Pineapples respond better to nitrogen than potassium. However, some potassium must be used in most Florida soils. Phosphorus is needed only in soils deficient in this element. In Florida, magnesium is more likely to be needed than calcium, and may be applied in the fertilizer or as a foliar spray. The minor element iron is needed in higher amounts, especially in soils with a pH of 6.5 or higher.

Bananas. *Musa hybrid*. Originally from India and China. The banana fruit develops from a flower stalk which comes from the center of the plant. Like the pineapple, the banana plant dies after it produces its fruit and should be cut down or removed. Several varieties are suggested for Florida; the Cavendish banana dwarf type, apple banana or manzana is a tall thin plant. The ladyfinger banana is smaller and has thin-skinned fruit with a milder flavor. The red Jamaica banana has leaves that are reddish bronze green and the fruit are large, fat and stubby. The horse banana or Orinoco is a plantain that is recommended for Florida. Bananas are propagated from suckers which should be allowed to dry out for a day or two before planting. Bananas need a rich, well drained soil and plenty of water and they must have organic fertilizer to grow properly.

Papaya. *Carica papaya*. Originally from tropical America. Papayas grow on a tall, slender tree with a palm like shape and soft wood. Papayas are subject to nematodes and should be heavily mulched, after being planted on a nematode-free soil. They are propagated from seeds, require a rich, moist, well drained soil and will respond well to a heavy fertilizer program. The trees are male, female or bisexual, and there are several varieties available with fruit from 1/2 to 10 pounds with yellow, orange or red flesh.

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We are sorry to announce the death of member Harry Zieg. Prior to his illness, Harry and his wife Marian had been welcome participants in many of our activities, including field trips. He shall be missed. Tampa Bay RFOI extends condolences to Marian and other members of the Zieg family.

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## NOVEMBER HOSPITALITY TABLE

Many thanks to the following people for providing us with the tasty goodies of which we partook wholeheartedly (and wholestomachly too!):

Bea Seekins	- Apricot-stuffed Dates, Dark Nut Bread & Orange Juice
Alice Beasor	- Dried Carambola and Dip
Janet Conard	- Banana Bread
Pearl Nelson	- Persimmon Cake
Terry Heath	- Fruit Plate
John & Natividad Burns	- Fresh Papaya

Please remember that the success of our monthly hospitality table is dependent upon everyone participating in providing our repast.

\* \* \*

## NOVEMBER PLANT DRAWING

Plant	Donor	Winner
Tamarind	Armando Mendez	Jim Murrie
Black Sapote	Armando Mendez	M. A. Simon?
Atemoya	Armando Mendez	P. Patamasank
Mamoncillo	Armando Mendez	Janet Conard
Allspice	RFCI	K. Netscher
Malanga	RFCI	Jim Murrie
Comfrey	Monica Brandies	Robbie Puls
Avocado	Betty Dickson	M. Brandies
Lotion Ginger	Walter Vines	C. Gomez-Sanchez
Lotion Ginger	" "	P. Patamasank
Lotion Ginger	" "	A. Mendez
Lotion Ginger	" "	Glenn Myrie
Murraya peniculata	George Merrill	Bruce Beasor
Murraya peniculata	" "	Jim Murrie
Surinam Cherry	Bruce Beasor	P. Patamasank
Surinam Cherry	" "	Frank Honeycutt
Surinam Cherry	" "	" "
Papaya	Betty Dickson	Bob Heath
Papaya	" "	Tony Gricius
Papaya	" "	S & M Charlton
Spanish Red Pineapple	A & I. Stark	Walter Vines
Durian	RFCI	A & I. Stark
Red Passion Fruit	RFCI	A & I. Stark
Yellow Passion Fruit	RFCI	?
Pineapple	Bob Heath	Frank Honeycutt
Sugar Apple	" "	" "
Capulin Cherry	C. Gomez-Sanchez	Tony Gricius
Yamagaki Persimmon	" " "	Walter Vines
Purple Passion Flower	?	S & M Charlton

(THANKS - Your participation helps make these drawings successful!)

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from IF&R, Oct. 27, 1988 issue:

# BATS ARE NOT VAMPIRES

"Bats". The mere mention of these ominous creatures immediately conjures up visions of witches and old abandoned castles. Joe Schaefer, an urban wildlife specialist with the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS), thinks that fear and superstition have inhibited our understanding and appreciation of these important animals in Florida's environments.

Schaefer said, "Bats are the only mammal capable of true flight (the flying squirrel merely glides, landing at a level lower than its take-off point)." Their wings are thin membranes of skin stretched from their front legs and fingers to their hind legs and tail. Thus, the name of the scientific order for bats - "Chiroptera", meaning "handwing".

One of the most interesting aspects of bat ecology is their unusual feeding technique. As bats fly, they utter a series of rapid, high-pitched squeaks that are reflected by nearby objects, similar to a sonar system. Quick reflexes and this echolocation system allow bats to pursue and to capture insects in darkness while avoiding collisions with tree branches, television antennas, telephone wires and other obstacles. Bats do not catch their food with their mouths, as purple martins and other swallows do. They net their prey with their wings, and quickly scoop it into their mouths.

Another fascinating fact about bats is that they can hibernate almost at will. If there is a bug recession because of a cold snap, a bat can just turn its metabolic, breathing and heart rates down and take a snooze until better times.

Schaefer said, "Of more than 1,000 species of bats in the world, only sixteen can be found in Florida. All are small and insectivorous. We have no vampires."

This fall, around Halloween, some bats may be out doing their thing. If you happen to see one at your front door, don't forget they eat insects. . . not candy.

For a free brochure on bats, contact the IFAS urban wildlife specialist near you.

Joe Schaefer, Department of Wildlife and Range Sciences, 118 Newins-Ziegler Hall, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida. 32611-0304. Telephone (904) 392-4851.

Craig Huegel, Pinellas County Extension Office, 12175 - 125th Street North, Largo, Fla. 32644. Telephone (813) 586-5477.

Frank Mazzotti, Broward County Extension Office, 3245 College Avenue, Davie, Fla. 33314. Telephone (305) 475-8010.

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*Warm wishes for a beautiful Christmas  
and a New Year filled with lasting happiness*

*HAPPY CHANUKAH!*

## A CHRISTMAS CAROL

Atemoya Spurge was berry upset, for on his way to the orchard he stubbed his mistletoe. "Bark! Spittlebug!" he sprouted to Bud Thatchit, his migrant field hand. "I sapote yew'll want tomato off too!" "Apple all, it is a holly day," seed Bud.

At this lime a-peared two or tree fern-raisins asking for a carnation for the poor, betrodden saplings graft out in the cold. "Are there no smudgepots? Are there no greenhouses?" Spurge proliferated. "Begreen!"

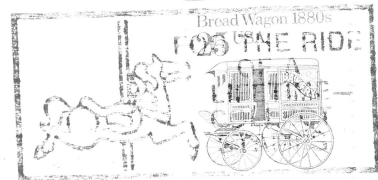
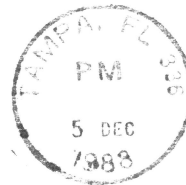
That nightshade, root after he retendrilled, his dead parsnip, Carob Morel, mushroomed before his potato eyes, and squashed, "You will be vitused by three creeping vines who will leaf you to Salvinia." The first acerola-ed into the room sprouting, "Ivy here, the Grape of Christmas Pudding!" The next carambola-ed in: "I yam the Garcinia of Christmas Privet." Then brambled in the Guava of Christmas Feijoa. Together, they carica-ed him to the compost heap.

Atemoya soursopped, "Help, Mamey! Papaya!" but to no abieu. Today, A Tree Grows In Brooklyn.

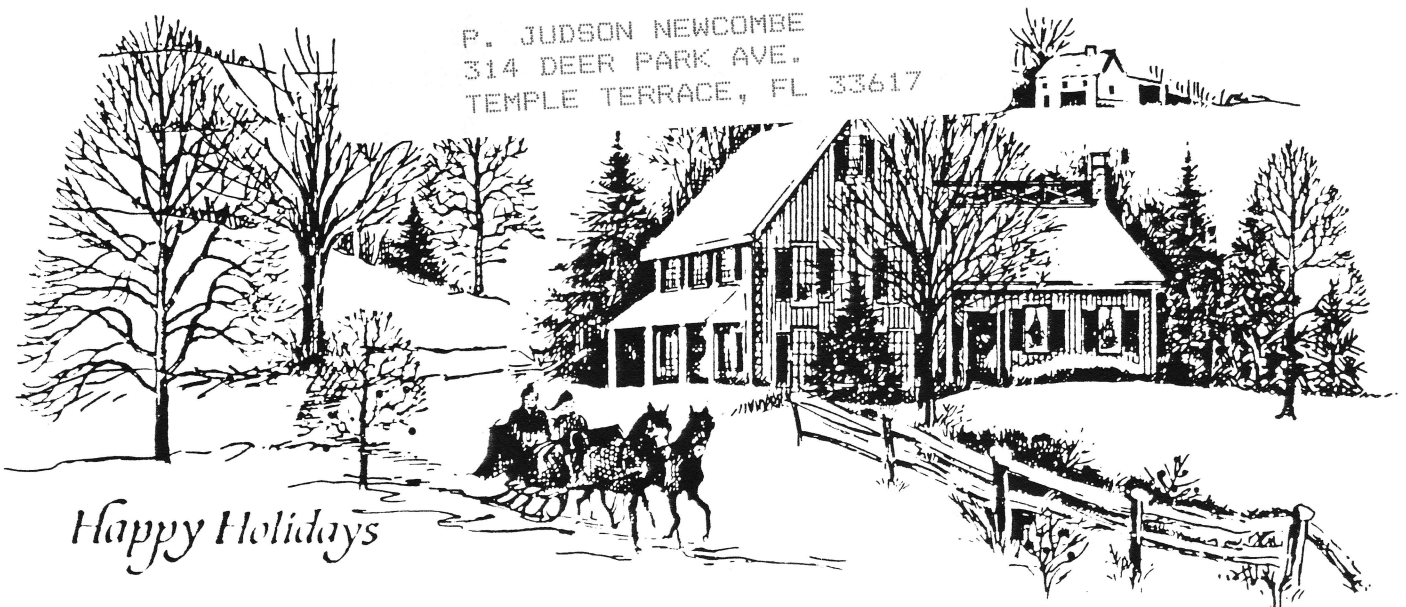
THE END

HOLLY HAPPYDAYS TO ALL AND TO ALL A GRAPE VINE!

Tampa Bay Chapter RFCI  
P O Box 260363  
Tampa FL 33685



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



*Happy Holidays*