



NEWSLETTER

JULY 1990

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

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(INCLUDING RENEWALS)

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

NEXT MEETING JULY 8, 1990

MEETING PLACE. HILLSBORO COUNTY AGRICULTURAL BUSINESS
CENTER. (COUNTY AG. AGENTS' BUILDING,
SEFFNER) Take I-4 to Exit 8 South, S.R. 579,
go past traffic light at U.S. 92 inter-
section. Building is less than 1/2 mile
on left (east) side of U.S. 92. Use parking
lot. Meeting room is in rear of building.
Main door will probably be locked. Walk
around.

PROGRAM JOHN STANG OF THE BLUEJILLION CORP. NURSERY
in Winter Haven will speak on the fabulous
blueberry, the origins and culture thereof,
and uses for the ripe fruit. John may be
bringing some blueberry plants for sale
for those who might be interested in
trying their hand at blueberry culture.
(This is the same program we had scheduled
for the June meeting. Unfortunately, our
speaker had to cancel out after the news-
letter was in the mail so we have rescheduled
the program for the July meeting.)

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CHRIS ROLLINS, director of the Fruit and Spice Park in Miami, who has been
our speaker on several occasions, is leading a Fruit Study Safari to Borneo,
August 31 to September 24.
For more information, please call (305) 247-5727.

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Treasury Audit...

Alice Burhenn, our library chairperson and a CPA, has volunteered to perform
the treasury audit for our club. Thanks so much, Alice.

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NEW MEMBERS:
Mr. & Mrs. Robert M. Holveck 6010 Axelrod Rd. Tampa, FL 33634 (813)886-3683

MEETINGS OF THE INTER-AMERICAN SOCIETY OF TROPICAL HORTICULTURE IN GUIANA AND JAMAICA

By Al Hendry

The Society was invited to Guiana by a couple of members of the agricultural ministry. Out of the meeting in Guiana came a booklet that contains probably all the information that is known about the carambola. The carambola is believed to have come from South-east Asia, although there is some question among horticulturists in that respect. It is grown in Guiana mostly as a dooryard fruit, although there are some orchards in Guiana. The variety they grow is very sour and tart, however.

Guiana is on the northeast coast of South America and is bisected by a couple of rather large rivers. It was originally settled along the coast by the Dutch in the 16th century and most of the people still live near the ocean. In the manner of the Dutch, much land was reclaimed along the Atlantic with dikes built similar to those in Holland. Of the rivers, the Demerara is the only large river with a bridge. It's a pontoon bridge and needs to be removed every night at 5:00 to allow the bauxite ships to go in or out of the river.

Al showed us a slide of a carambola plantation and many of the carambolas were laying on the ground, having fallen off the trees, because there is nothing else they can do with them. They have a small airport but it is not big enough for freight planes to carry the carambolas to the markets in Europe or North America.

One of the priorities of the workshop meeting in Guiana was to develop some means of processing the carambolas so that they are not wasted. They can be made into sauces and syrups, candied and dried. If they could find a way to use the carambolas, perhaps they would make enough money to build some bridges!!

The country has bauxite mines and even a few small gold mines but they are not producing a lot of income for the country. Likewise, it's not a tourist country. There are no beaches because of the dikes and land reclamation along the coastline. There are no tourist facilities whatsoever and the roads are so poor they are virtually impassable during the rainy season.

Al showed us some slides of the markets in Guiana and it was obvious that the vegetables and fruit are not uncommon to the average American. Also, the vegetables look exceptionally good and quite a lot of the fruit likewise but some was of inferior quality. He had several slides also of the boats on the rivers. They are used almost like taxis, running up and down the rivers, and it is notable that much of the year, that's about the only way to travel. One of the boats he showed us was named Carambola, which was certainly apropos. The docks along the river were very busy with people coming and going, and fruit, vegetables and other products being loaded onto the boats for distribution throughout the country and into export areas.

All the construction in Georgetown, the capital city, is of wood. One thing they have plenty of is wood and it's the cheapest construction material they can use, so all the buildings are built of wood and some of them are actually monumental. They claim to have the world's largest wood church in Georgetown, and it well might be. It certainly is massive.

Al showed us a picture of a carambola plantation and noted that the entire plantation is inter-planted with other things. Between the carambola trees were bananas, sugar apples, coffee bean trees. The soil is so rich they don't have to fertilize. The cost of production of a pound of carambolas is about .09¢. He showed us a picture of a bilimbi which is a very sour first cousin of the carambola. Pickles made with the bilimbi are good and this is its primary function. It's frequently called a pickle tree. Al indicated it's also very good for cleaning brass.

In Jamaica, Al found great emphasis on pest control without the use of pesticides. A farmer from the Dominican Republic indicated that he had lost two years of tomato production to the sweet potato white fly. He has now gone to an integrated natural pest control system by keeping the surrounding fields cleared to eliminate some of the breeding grounds for the white fly and also by the introduction of predator insects.

They went to a citrus grove in Jamaica. When the citrus is shipped to Germany, scarred fruit brings a higher price than perfectly clear fruit because Germans are so concerned about pesticides, they are willing to pay a higher price for scarred fruit which has obviously not been sprayed.

In Kingston, the capital of Jamaica, there are several botanical gardens, most of which have not been kept up. This is true of most of the Central and South American countries, which were colonies of European countries until fairly recently. Though many botanical gardens were established by the mother countries, most of them have not been kept up as they should have been and the reason is lack of funds, because most of these countries are relatively poor. Hope Garden is the only one in Kingston which has been kept up. It was damaged considerably by Hurricane Gilbert which devastated Kingston, but it's hard to tell at this time that it was ever damaged. All the dead and uprooted trees have been removed and new growth has taken over.

Al had some good pictures of the Malay apple on the tree and in the market. It's a fruit of excellent quality, about pear size and shape, with a single large seed, but it is extremely cold tender. He also had several slides of bauxite mines in Jamaica. Bauxite, the ore of aluminum, is mined in strip mines similar to phosphate mines over in Polk County. The mining does considerable damage to the landscape. Bauxite is not processed into aluminum in Jamaica but is shipped as a raw material to other countries where it is refined into aluminum.

Cut flowers is also a large industry in Jamaica. Roses, anthuriums, flowering gingers and other cut flowers are grown there and shipped to markets in North America and Japan. Coffee is also a major agricultural product and some of the most expensive coffee in the world is grown in Jamaica. So expensive, Al says, that the Japanese are the only ones who can afford it. A large percentage of Jamaican coffee is shipped to Japan. As we all know, Jamaican coffee is certainly among the best for flavor in the world.

We saw some slides of mangoes which are grown pretty extensively in Jamaica and some very good close-ups of the cashew fruit and nut hanging on the tree. The fruit is called the cashew apple and is used to make wine or preserves or is just eaten out of hand. In a lot of places, the cashew nut itself is thrown away and the fruit is eaten because the nut is surrounded by a very acidic liquid and must be specially treated before it is edible. He also had some good slides of the akee which is sometimes called the national fruit of Jamaica. The akee is a beautiful bright red fruit of triangular cross section which splits open when ripe, revealing the white nutty flavored aril with a shiny black seed attached at one end. The entire fruit is poisonous before it splits open naturally and the over-ripe fruit are also poisonous due to the rancid condition that develops. The well developed arils from newly opened fruit can be eaten safely.

On the trip to Jamaica, the delegates came from the U.S., from several of the Caribbean islands, Trinidad, Guadalupe, Chile and Ecuador. Papers from Honduras were read by someone else because the delegates couldn't come and there were some very interesting presentations from some of these delegates.

The next meeting will be in Chile and anyone who is interested in going to one of these meetings is welcome. Al indicated he would have all of the information and the time when the next meeting occurs when all that has been decided.

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JUNE HOSPITALITY TABLE (Thanks to all for a veritable feast!!)

Monica Brandies	- Pumpkin Bread
Jo Ann Cimino	- Watermelon & Mango Carrot Cake
Cricket Clifton	- Key Lime Pie
Tom Economou	- Vino de Maranones (Cashew Apple Wine)
Lita & Fernando Galang	- Canned Jakfruit
Al Hendry	- Passionfruit Bread & Guava Bread
Pat Jean	- Coconut-Walnut Bars
Pearl Luxenberg	- Coffee Cake
Nancy McCormack	- Pound Cake & Pecan Ring
Joan Murrie	- Apple Crisp
Margaret Zoehrer	- Cherry Jetts & Peanut Butter Fingers

June Plant Drawing:

<u>PLANT</u>	<u>DONOR</u>	<u>WINNER</u>
Yellow Passionfruit	Frank Honeycutt	Jo Ann Cimino
Yellow Passionfruit	Frank Honeycutt	Jules Cohan
Yellow Passionfruit	Frank Honeycutt	Albert Jean
Yellow Passionfruit	Frank Honeycutt	Jim & Joan Murrie
Plantain	Frank Honeycutt	?????
Papaya	Frank Honeycutt	Monica Brandies
Papaya	Frank Honeycutt	Jules Cohan
Papaya	Frank Honeycutt	Win Miller
Kiwano	Fernando Galang	Albert Jean
Kiwano	Fernando Galang	Monica Brandies
Kiwano	Fernando Galang	Charles Novak
Kiwano	Fernando Galang	Jo Ann Cimino
Kiwano	Jules Cohan	Jim & Joan Murrie
Pineapple	Jules Cohan	Mel & Pearl Luxenberg
Yucca	Bob Heath	Charles Novak
Cherry of the Rio Grande	Bob Heath	Max Means
Ginger	Bob Heath	Charles Novak
Kwaimuk	A & L Stark	Jules Cohan
Hot Peppers	A & L Stark	Lillie Belle Simmons
Hot Peppers	A & L Stark	?????
Mangoes	Jim & Joan Murrie	Jo Ann Cimino
Hardy Kiwi	Charles Novak	A & L Stark
Chamomile Flower	Bill Mendez	Alice Burhenn
Tamarind	Alice Burhenn	Charles Novak
Seminole Pumpkin	Marcia ???	Al Hendry

RECIPE OF THE MONTH:

Cricket Clifton's Key Lime Pie

Blend 1 can Eagle condensed milk and 8oz. cream cheese until smooth. Add 4oz. key lime juice, and blend completely. Pour into a pastry or graham cracker pie shell or tart shells (at the meeting, it was poured into small cups, each containing a vanilla wafer). Chill until firm. Serve with whipped cream or Cool Whip, with a lemon/lime zest garnish.

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From TROPICAL FRUIT NEWS, May 1990 Issue:

One of the most remarkable but unappreciated aspects of horticulture is the fact that a single plant can give rise to a field of flowers, a forest, an orderly grove or plantations thousands of miles apart. The most famous example of this phenomena is perhaps coffee, which, in the western hemisphere, was at one time all derived from a single tree which survived a trip to Jamaica in 1730. Another example is the Mulgoba Mango of a Professor Elbridge Gale, who had retired to West Palm Beach before the turn of the century. This mango was killed to the ground during the freeze of 1895, but sprouted again. One of the seedlings was the very first Haden Mango, the sole parent of innumerable backyard plantings and commercial groves. A current and local example is the Kohala Longan that stands in front of Bill Whitman's house in Miami Beach, and which has supplied in excess

of 1000 clones. In the garden, in the rear of Morris Arkin's house in Coral Gables, Florida, stands the original Carambola tree whose name has become associated with the fruit and the man. There is no counting the number of trees that can trace their parentage to this one specimen, which flowered and fruited for the first time in 1973-74.

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From Tampa Bay Chapter RFCI Newsletter (Jan. 1982 issue):

MIRACLE FRUIT (Synsepalum dulcificum)

One of a number of plants bearing fruit or leaves which, when eaten, have the property of anesthetizing the sour taste buds on the tongue so that other foods, no matter how sour, eaten during a short period thereafter will exhibit their natural sweetness and subtle flavorings. Thus, a lemon becomes a delicious new taste treat under the influence of one or more berries from the Miracle Fruit plant. Some claim an enhancement of other foods, such as white potato. Depending upon the individual and the quantity of berries consumed, the effect may last from 15 minutes to 3 hours or more.

Known in the literature since 1852, the plant is indigenous to West Africa where it has been used to make maize bread more palatable and to give sweetness to sour palm wine and beer. The plant is semi-tropical in nature, although instances are known of the plant surviving in protected locations (in the ground) as far north as the Tampa Bay region. Extremely slow growing unless given ideal soil conditions (wet, acidic, humusy) and forced with light applications of dilute liquid fertilizer, it may only grown an inch or two the first year or so. Full grown plants are about four feet tall or less in tub culture. A 9" plant might bear fruit, but generally they must reach about two feet.

All efforts to isolate the sweetening principle failed until 1968. Kenzo Kurihara and Lloyd M. Beidler of the Dept. of Biological Science at Florida State University (FSU), Tallahassee, reported in Science (p. 1241, Sept. 20, 1968) that 300 berries from plants grown in FSU greenhouses were used to discover that the sweetening factor is a glycoprotein with a probable molecular weight of 44,000. This protein binds to the receptors of the tongue's taste buds and modifies their function.

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THE CARAMBOLA (continued from last issue)

Then came the "sweet carambola revolution" in Florida initiated by Dr. Bob Knight and the Rare Fruit Council International of Miami. In 1973, Dr. Knight, a research horticulture scientist of the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Station in Miami, traveled to the origin of the carambola - Asia. He brought back seeds from Malaysia and Thailand. Knight's seeds were distributed among Council members. Thus was born the "Arkin" cultivar - considered a "sweet carambola". Morris Arkin, a member of the Rare Fruit Council, selected the cultivar that bears his name from these seeds. The "Arkin" cultivar soon was the market preference in North American markets replacing the "Golden Star". The "Fwang Tung" was also brought in as a grafted plant. It's sweeter and better tasting than "Arkin"; yet as a commercial variety, less desirable. This expedition was blessed and financially supported by Miami's Rare Fruit Council's Board and membership. The Council was also responsible for later importing and testing in Florida other important cultivars such as "B-10" and "B-16" and "Hew-1". (2)

With sweeter cultivars, there was a surge of South Florida plantings in the 1970s and 1980s, but in 1989, 89% of the trees were less than four years of age. Promotion of the carambola is needed since production is high enough today to depress prices after the first weeks of the season. (1) Other limiting factors in South Florida are the chance of annual winter freezes and the high cost of raw land. The future for this beautiful, unique star-shaped, golden colored, tropical fruit in world markets looks promising.

So what's happening today to my beautiful back-yard sour carambola? It's still growing, but I have a sweet carambola, the Fwang Tung, thank you! Large supermarket chains are selling the fashionable sweet better than the sour carambolas at \$2.00 to \$4.00 per pound

around the USA. I don't sell my fruit, though. I have new neighbors in Miami from Cuba, Nicaragua, Panama, Guatemala, San Salvador, Peru, Trinidad, Costa Rica, Columbia, Jamaica and Guiana. You guessed it; they miss their carambolas! I believe in the "good neighbor policy". I share my carambolas and no more "rum and Coca Cola" from Trinidad. We're drinking rum and carambola from Miami!

(1) Campbell, C.W., 1989. Proceedings of the Interamerican Society for Tropical Horticulture, International Carambola Workshop. "Propagation & Production Systems for Carambola" Vol. 33:66-71

(2) Knight, Robert J., Jr., 1989. Proceedings of the ISTH, International Carambola Workshop. Vol. 33:72-78. "Carambola Cultivars & Improvement Programs"

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