



NEWSLETTER AUGUST 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 AUGUST 12, 1990

PROGRAM FIELD TRIP TO BEMIS GORDON'S, BROOKSVILLE.

Bemis Gordon and his wife Faye have over 20
acres to the east of Brooksville off of

Highway 50. Bemis devotes his time to amassing a collection of temperate zone plants, fruiting trees which will bear in the Brooksville area and not suffer too badly from cold winters. He has over 100 different varieties of pear tree, a considerable number of apple trees, peach trees, plum trees, persimmon trees, muscadine grapes, avocados, kiwis, blackberries, haws, hickory nuts, chestnuts, pecans, feijoas and many others, all of which bear in his gardens. Bemis is in his early 70's and has been working in nurseries since he was 14. His expertise is immense and his energy seems to be unlimited. Those who wish to participate in this field trip can meet at the Seffner Agricultural Center where we normally meet, so we may double up on vehicles and save gasoline on the trip. Plan to be at the Ag Center at 1:00 if you intend to share a ride with others. To get to the Gordons', go north on I-75 to County Road 50. Turn west on 50 for 2-1/2 miles to White Road, which is a clay road on the left of Highway 50. Go one mile south on White Road, cross Old Trilby Road, up the hill 200 yards to a sign which says "Gordons" on the right side. Drive in and park in front of his house. The trip will take a little over one hour driving time. We will have no raffle and no tasting table. Anyone who wants to bring a snack may do so. The tour will take approximately 3 hours and we will be back in Seffner in time for everyone to get home before dark.

* * *

NEW MEMBERS:

Victoria & K. Mack Parsons
604 Southwood Cove
Brandon, FL 33511 (813) 681-8319

Julius & Frieda Meding
2289 Lake Forest Ave.
Spring Hill, FL 34609 (904) 683-8956

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TEA TIME by Jules Cohan

Years ago, the Army, in the Caribbean area bases, served a very full bodied tea that most of us enjoyed drinking cold. Several years later, in college, a professor from Argentina raved about an herb that they made into a tea. He gave samples to us students, and guess what, the herb he called Máté (pronounced Mott) tea was the same. We know it as Ilex Paraguariensis.

Does anyone know where I can get some seeds?

* * *

BLUEBERRY GROWING by John Stang

John Stang is a partner in a blueberry farm about five miles north of Gainesville in Alachua County where commercial blueberry production in Florida first started. Development of blueberry farming was initiated by Dr. Sugarman, Dr. Sharp and Dr. Irene of the University of Florida at Gainesville. Most of the state's commercial production is in this area but that is rapidly changing as blueberry farms spread to other areas.

John and his partner grow both Highbush and Rabbiteye blueberries in separate blocks of their farm. John showed us several slides of their farm from the air, and rows of blueberries close up. The Rabbiteye blueberries are planted in rows 12 feet apart with individual bushes on 6 foot centers. The Highbush blueberries are planted in rows 10 feet apart with the individual plants on 3 foot centers. This provides about 1200 plants per acre and a mature plant can produce up to 25 pounds of blueberries per season. The Climax variety is the Rabbiteye variety that they have planted most extensively on their farm. They are using the Sharp, which is a Highbush, extensively also.

The largest plants are now about 8 feet tall and were planted in 1982 so they are approaching or already at their maximum productive level. They also have some planting of Premiere and Becky Blue. The plants are very sensitive to chilling requirement time during the winter and it is necessary to plant blueberries with the chilling hour requirements for the latitude where plants are to be grown. It is also necessary to have two different varieties in close proximity to permit cross pollinization. John indicated that when they started, they made every mistake in the book in trying to grow blueberries. Originally, they tried to operate their farm on a part time basis and the plants were inundated with weeds.

In the first couple of years, it is very critical to keep the weeds down to permit the blueberries to grow; otherwise, they get root bound with weeds and just sit there. After a couple of years, the weeds are easier to keep out; the plants tend to shade out some of the weeds and the plants are big enough that the weeds are not so critical. At first it is almost necessary to remove the weeds by hand from around the plants to allow them to grow without the competition.

The Rabbiteyes normally have a lower chilling hour requirement and can be planted further south. John feels that the fruit quality of the Rabbiteye is also better than the Highbush.

Blueberries like a well drained soil; they don't like to have wet feet but they do like to have a lot of water - well drained soil with a lot of irrigation. The problem with the harvesting of blueberries is that the berries do not mature at the same time so it requires three or four pickings during the season to harvest the berries. They harvest all their blueberries by hand and pack them by hand. It is labor intensive but as long as the blueberries bring more than a dollar a pound, they make money.

The Highbush varieties are self pollinating but mixing varieties tends to produce larger crops. So they have been inter-planting the Sharp blueberries with the 2/1 release which has only recently been released by Gainesville.

John indicated that they mulch their plants. They've tried straw and black plastic and other things for mulching to keep the weeds down.

Blueberries must have an acid soil to develop. If your soil has a pH over 5.5, you might as well give up. You can't grow blueberries. You can add sulfur and other acidifying agents and mulch them with oak leaves but if you don't have a good acid soil to start with, you need to find someplace else to plant your blueberries.

John indicated that blueberries need a lot of water. They started out with a drip irrigation system but found out it did not provide enough water and they changed to a micro-jet system. They fertilize eight times a year starting in March and they use a fertilizer called "Blueberry Special". It has additional calcium and its nitrogen is ammoniacal. That is ammonium nitrate. Also, sometimes they use straight ammonium sulfate. They also spray with Benlate and Captan for fungus.

Weather can also be a problem with growing blueberries in that a late cold spell after the plants have blossomed or put on fruit can cause considerable damage to the blossoms or fruit. The cold, of course, doesn't hurt the plant. It is extremely important to get the blueberries on the market first in the spring but a late cold snap can destroy the early blossom and fruit and considerably decrease the profit for the year as the later fruit tends to bring a lower price in the market. John indicated that they are considering the purchase of wind machines to help protect the crop from frost.

They propagate most of their plants from cuttings taken in August and rooted in mist beds in shade houses. The rooting trays have a mixture of Perlite and peat at a ratio of about 40-60. They get about 75% success in their rooting endeavors. Mist is operated on an intermittent basis just to keep the plants from drying out. They use the semi hard wood which is the previous flush of growth to the last flush. It normally takes about six weeks and the most critical factor is the quality of the water. Also, it is important that the soil does not become saturated and remain that way because too much water will rot the cuttings.

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FIRE BLIGHT

Fire blight, bane of Pyracantha, apples, pears and loquats. Fire blight is caused by the bacterium *Erwinia amylovora*, a very serious disease that causes death of leaves, branches and occasionally the entire tree. The symptoms are easy to spot. The leaves turn brown, then black, and appear scorched or burned, but usually remain attached to the tree. The branches then die and turn dark. The disease interferes with fruit set and tree growth and must be controlled.

Control requires complete pruning of the dead foliage with subsequent disposal of the infected material to prevent spreading the bacteria. Shears should be disinfected between each cut by dipping in a solution of household bleach and water.

After pruning, the tree should be sprayed with neutral copper three times at two week intervals.

* * *

July Hospitality Table:

JoAnn Cimino.....	Banana Wheat Bars
Pat Jean.....	Pineapple Coconut Cookies & Assorted Fruit Juices
Joan Murrie.....	Mango Slices
George Riegler.....	Pears
Lottice Shipley.....	Peppers & Cheese

July Plant Drawing:

<u>PLANT</u>	<u>DONOR</u>	<u>WINNER</u>
Rio Grande Cherry	Bob Heath	Pat Jean
Grumichama	Bob Heath	Frank Honeycutt
Pineapple	Bob Heath	Glen Myrie
Papaya (3)	Frank Honeycutt	Scottie Fingar
Papaya (3)	Frank Honeycutt	A & L Stark
Papaya (3)	Frank Honeycutt	A & L Stark
Papaya (3)	Frank Honeycutt	Truett Holcomb
Papaya (3)	Frank Honeycutt	Pat Jean
Papaya (3)	Frank Honeycutt	?????
Papaya (3)	Frank Honeycutt	?????
Passion Fruit	Frank Honeycutt	William Yedkois
Loquat	Frank Honeycutt	?????
Naranjilla	Charles Novak	William Yedkois
Oriental Guava	George Riegler	Bob Heath
Oriental Guava	George Riegler	Frank Novak
Oriental Guava	George Riegler	Louis Figueroa
Oriental Guava	George Riegler	Frank Honeycutt
Seminole Pumpkin	Monica Brandies	Bill Mendez
Lemon Grass	Lloyd Shipley	Glen Myrie
Loquat	Lloyd Shipley	Glen Myrie
Loquat	Lloyd Shipley	?????
Loquat	Lloyd Shipley	?????
White Sapote	Lloyd Shipley	?????
Surinam Cherry	Frank Tintera	Frank Pupello
Sugar Apple	Frank Tintera	Robert Holveck
Oriental Guava	Frank Tintera	Dale Anderson
Papaya	Frank Tintera	Dale Anderson

Please, Please sign the sheet when you win a plant!!!!

(or do you like being called ????? ?)

THE MYRTACEAE FAMILY

Grumichama (Eugenia dombeyi) - The Grumichama is a good hedge plant but generally is used as a specimen. As a tree it is very upright in habit, growing to 20' to 25' in height. The leaves are a very attractive glossy dark green. It bears a large number of fruit which have the appearance of the northern Bing Cherry. The flavor resembles cherries, also. They bloom and fruit between March and June, sometimes bearing multiple crops during this period. Generally delicious, this fruit may be preferred to the Surinam Cherry. Propagated from seed, they usually take three to four years to begin fruit production. The fruit is glossy, purplish-black, 1" to 1-1/2" in diameter, and like the Surinam Cherry, generally has only a single seed. Also, like the Surinam Cherry, its only problem is the Carib Fly. Delicious jam, jelly, pie, etc. are made from this fruit.

Cherry of the Rio Grande (Eugenia aggregata) - The Cherry of the Rio Grande is from Brazil and makes a very beautiful tree to 30' (usually less in central Florida). It also blooms and fruits from March to June. The fruit is about 1" to 1-1/2" long, purplish-red when mature, and usually has a single seed. The flavor is very close to that of the Grumichama and this fruit is attractive to birds. The plant may be used as a hedge but plants are not readily available in quantity unless you propagate your own. Seedlings may bear in four years (usually 8 to 10 years or more in central Florida), and the plants are quite cold hardy.

Pitomba (Eugenia luschnathiana) - The Pitomba is another that can be used as a hedge or as a specimen tree. They fruit in May and June. The foliage is a lighter green than the others mentioned so far. The fruit is larger, sometimes golf ball size, and a brilliant yellow. It has very tasty flesh, somewhat resembling apricot in flavor and makes a preserve very similar to apricot preserve. Propagation is also by seed which occur one or two per fruit. Seedlings take about 3 years to bear fruit. This plant is a bit more sensitive to cold but recovers quickly when frozen.

Wax Jambu (Syzygium javanicum) - The Wax Jambu is not recommended for central Florida because of its tropical nature, not being likely to survive our winters outdoors. It makes a dense pyramid shaped tree. It bears beautiful white or creamy yellow flowers in April followed by waxy pink, white or white with a pink blush fruit having an unreal appearance. They are pear shaped, 2-1/2" to 3" long, almost the size of a Bartlett pear, usually with one seed, a crisp watery flesh tasting like a watered-down Rose Apple. Being such a bland fruit, its use is mainly ornamental. It will grow in only the most protected locations, since temperatures of 30 to 32°F will cause severe injury. Seedlings probably take 4 or more years to fruit. The tree will air-layer readily, however.

Rose Apple (Syzygium jambos) - The Rose Apple is a very showy tree in flower. The flowers resemble a yellow Powder Puff, being about of the same size. It will bloom and fruit from late February until early summer. The yellow fruit are 2" to 2-1/2" in diameter and will drop when ripe. They are hollow and have one or more seeds. The crisp watery flesh has a distinct rose flavor. They are eaten fresh, stewed, preserved and made into a very distinctive jelly. The fruit is severely attacked by the Carib fly. The tree will reach 30' to 35' in height and has a weeping growth habit. New growth is a very attractive wine red color. It is propagated by seed, seedlings bearing in about 4 years. It will also air-layer and fruit may be obtained in 2 years by this method.

(To be continued...)

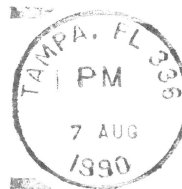
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RECIPE OF THE MONTH

PINEAPPLE-COCONUT DROPS

1. In mixer bowl, cream till light and fluffy:
 - 1/2 cup granulated sugar
 - 1/4 cup packed brown sugar
 - 1/4 cup butter or margarine
 - 1/4 cup shortening
 - 1 egg
 - 1 tsp. vanilla
2. Stir into creamed mixture sifted:
 - 1-1/4 cup all-purpose flour
 - 3/4 tsp. salt
 - 1/2 tsp. baking soda
3. Blend mixture well.
4. Stir in:
 - 1 cup flaked coconut
 - 1/2 cup chopped walnuts
 - 1/2 cup crushed pineapple, well drained
5. Drop from teaspoon about two inches apart on greased cookie sheet. Bake in 375° oven for 8 to 10 minutes. Let stand 30 seconds; remove from cookie sheet to rack to cool. Makes about 3-1/2 dozen.

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