



NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 1991

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

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE: BOB HEATH
THERESA HEATH
ARNOLD STARK
LILLIAN STARK

NEWSLETTER MAIL ADDRESS: ARNOLD & LILLIAN STARK
6305 EUREKA SPRINGS RD.
TAMPA FL 33610

PRESIDENT: JULES COHAN

CHAPTER MAIL ADDRESS: 313 PRUETT RD., SEFFNER FL 33584
(INCLUDING RENEWALS)

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

NEXT MEETING. FEBRUARY 10, 1991

MEETING PLACE HILLSBOROUGH 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 intersection.
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 LARRY SCHATZER, OWNER OF OUR KIDS NURSERY,
WILL SPEAK ON TROPICAL FRUIT GROWING. He
has a nursery in Winter Gardens where he
is growing a variety of tropical fruiting
and ornamental plants in his greenhouse.
This should prove to be an interesting talk.
Also, we will have our usual plant raffle
and tasting table. See ya there!

**WOW! IT'S REALLY GETTING CLOSE NOW! WORK AT THE CLUBHOUSE HAS
BEEN MOVING RIGHT ALONG. WE SHOULD BE MEETING THERE SOON - THAT IS
IF MORE OF YOU CAN COME ON OUT AND HELP GET THE PLACE READY. THE
NEXT SCHEDULED WORK SESSION IS SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 16, AND SUNDAY,
FEBRUARY 17; CONTACT ARNOLD STARK FOR MORE INFORMATION. MEANWHILE
WE'D LIKE TO ACKNOWLEDGE THOSE WHO HAVE ALREADY GIVEN SO MUCH OF
THEIR TIME AND SWEAT:**

RFCI Members: Monica Brandies, Frank & Alice Burhenn, Leo
Cotter, Bob & Terry Heath, Frank Honeycutt, Al Jean. Juā Newcomb,
Charles Novak, Arnold & Lillian Stark, Frank Tintera, Paul Zmoda.

Academic Achievement Center: Adam Anderson, parents Chuck &
Julie, 2 brothers, and 1 friend; Tim Woods, mother Arlene, brother,
and sister; Jesse Bartlett, parents Richard & Pam; Billy Stallings,
mother Susan; Chris Crowson, parents Donna & Ed.

We apologize in advance if we inadvertantly ommitted any names; let
us know so we can thank you in print if we did. As you can see, the
list is not very large, but the amount of work remaining is. We'd
love to write your name in the next list. Please join us in this
worthwhile and exciting project!

TROPICAL FRUIT FIESTA by Tom Economou

Tom has been speaking to our group almost annually for five or six years and he never fails to hold the rapt attention of the audience throughout his entire program. This is partly because of his friendly demeanor and his relaxed presentation. But also, it is because of the numerous fruit that he collects for 'show and tell'. Today was no exception. He spread his tropical goodies over three tables for our examination and discussion.

Tom has spoken about rare fruits all over the country and even one time in London where he met a woman PhD who's work was with the mangosteen. But despite working with this fruit and her familiarity with it, she had never, ever seen one. Tom, like the rest of us, wants to see the fruit, to feel it, to taste it. One time in Panama, he found a mangosteen tree that everybody said had no mangosteens left on it, but he climbed the tree and shook the limbs and came away with a bushel. Needless to say, he gorged himself on mangosteens that day. That was in the Panama Canal Zone at the Summit Gardens. Tom explained for those of us who had never been to Panama that on completion of the canal, the United States set aside five miles on either side where no construction was allowed. It is a total wilderness 10 miles wide and the length of the Panama Canal from the Atlantic to the Pacific. It is a wonderful place to go for rare fruit aficionados. The Summit Gardens is there and they have the largest collection of mangosteens in Central America except for the Gardens in Honduras. The Summit Gardens is a plant introduction station set up by the United States government in the 1920's.

Tom collects most of his fruit for his presentations from the IFAS experiment station in Miami. The first fruit he held up was about as big as your thumb and was the largest one he could find at this time of year. It is the jakfruit which can reach 80 pounds in size when mature. It is one of the most important fruits in Southeast Asia, and there are as many as 25 different cultivars of this important fruit.

Next he held up the most popular fruit in Jamaica, the akee, which is safe to eat at the right time but deadly poison otherwise. A significant number of people have died from eating unripe akee, among them the wife of the noted horticulturist Popenoe. Tom says that whenever he eats akee in Hamaica, he sits between two Jamaicans and tells them, "you eat first and when you have eaten, I'll eat."

Tom held up a banana blossom and asked if anybody knew what it was. Everybody did, of course. Then how many had eaten it and of course, only a couple had. He asked how many knew how to prepare it to eat. Apparently the Vietnamese, among others, make soup from it. They eat the little undeveloped bananas within the petals of the blossom.

Next, he showed us some Indian jujubes which are very similar to the Chinese jujube which we are growing extensively in this area in our yards, and Tom sent a couple around for people to see and taste.

One of the fruit on the table was the beautiful velvet apple which is a fruit about the size of an orange with a fuzzy velvet skin. The fuzz will rub off and may cause itching on the sensitive parts of the body. To avoid this, simply put the fruit in a bucket of water and rub the fuzz off before you cut it. The velvet apple is a cold sensitive fruit with strong fragrance and delicious taste. It is related to the persimmon and the black sapote and comes from Southeast Asia. In the Phillipines it is also known as the mobola.

Tom told us that he spent most of one day picking the fruit display at the IFAS experiment station in South Florida. Frequently he also gets fruit from the Fruit and Spice Park but these all came from the IFAS center.

He next introduced us to the tamarind pod which is a big bean that also comes from Southeast Asia. It's used extensively in China and other Asian countries, though here it is best known as an ingredient in worcestershire sauce. It is also used to make drinks or is eaten directly from the pod. It is the pulp around the bean that is eaten.

His next presentation was the egg fruit, a very delicious tropical fruit about the size of an orange with a yellow grainy pulp resembling a boiled egg yolk in texture but has an extremely good, sweet flavor. It is also excellent in making pies and milk shakes. He passed a couple around for members to taste and examine. Grafted trees may be grown in pots and will fruit when the tree is relatively small. The fruit is also called a canistel.

Tom showed us the fruit of the chayote vine, several of which Arnold Stark had brought to the meeting, and one of which Tom indicated that he wanted to take home to plant. The chayote is a vegetable fruit related to the squash and which grows on a vine. It is perennial unless the cold kills it and under ideal conditions, is a rampant vine and a heavy producer.

Another interesting fruit which Tom had was the *monstera deliciosa*. It is usually grown as an ornamental with large perforated leaves, an ornamental that grows up trees as a vine and produces a jack-in-the-pulpit type flower followed by the 1-1/2 inch diameter, 8" long *monstera deliciosa* fruit. The fruit is unique in that it ripens about 1" per day and it's eaten at that rate, kept in the refrigerator and eaten 1" per day. It has a very delicious pineapple-like flavor.

The sapodilla is a native fruit of the Americas, cultivated by the Mayas in the Yucatan, Guatemala, Belize, Honduras and other countries in that area. Tom passed the fruit around for people to examine. It is a brown fruit the size of an egg and bigger. It will not ripen on the tree but it ripens very well once it's mature and has been allowed to ripen indoors. It is a delicious fruit and there's no better place to find the highest quality the fruit may develop than in the Central American area. The sapodilla is also the tree from which chiclet is obtained for making chewing gum. The white sap is extracted from the bark of the tree and is boiled down to make the chicle for chewing gum. The sapodilla has been grown in South Florida for at least 100 years and on Big Pine Key there used to be a plantation of sapodilla trees. Most of the trees are still there but the plantation is overgrown. It's just a jungle at this point. Herb Hill indicated there is also a wild sapodilla that is native to Florida and to the Bahamas.

The mamey was Tom's next offering. The mamey, a native fruit of the New World, is probably the most revered fruit in Cuba and Cubans will pay heavily for it. The fruit has a brown fuzzy outer skin which does not change color as it ripens. In order to determine when it's ripe, you have to scratch the skin thru to the flesh underneath to see if it is green or whether it's turned pink, orange or red, which indicates it is ripe.

Tom also had several pods of the pigeon pea, which forms a small tree and is perennial if the cold doesn't get it. The peas are round, about 3 to 6 in a pod, and are usually picked brown and shelled out. The dried peas are cooked like any other dried beans or peas. The flavor is somewhat different than any other of the common peas and is esteemed by many. The pigeon pea is a staple throughout the Caribbean and in the Bahamas. In Trinidad along the highways you see them growing wild.

The star apple, not to be confused with the carambola, is a beautiful tree with pretty velvety leaves and pretty fruit which Tom had brought for us to examine. In Spanish speaking countries it is known as the caimito. The fruit is orange size, and has two varieties, one purple, one green when ripe. It is an excellent fruit with a very delicious flavor.

Tom also brought a couple of green sapote fruit which are actually superior in flavor to the mamey, but is much less well known. The fruit is very similar to the mamey sapote. However, the flesh is finer and smoother in texture. The fruit may grow to as much as 5" long. It is also slightly more frost resistant than the mamey sapote. A relative of the persimmon and the star apple, namely the black sapote, was also available in Tom's collection. The black sapote is roughly the size of a persimmon, and is one of Tom's favorite fruit. It remains green when ripe but becomes soft and chocolate brown on the inside. The flavor is delicious but is not reminiscent of chocolate pudding. It can be eaten out of hand and is used to make an interesting drink and desserts.

Tom finished his program with slides of Central America, fresh picked pineapples, very, very sweet, from the bromeliad family, the peach palm which grows on a thorny palm tree but is a delicious fruit and has the highest protein of any fruit in the world, the star apple, or caimito, the naranjilla which is a small shrub with a small orange size fruit from which a drink is extracted, the cherimoya and soursops, two members of the anona family, the Spanish lime, the rambutan, the passion fruit, the cashew, cacao from which chocolate is made, the mangosteen, the jakfruit, the lipstick tree, the macadamia nut and the abiu.

* * *

*** PLANT FESTIVAL ***

The April Plant Festival at the University of South Florida Botanical Gardens is still in the planning stage but there is much work to be done before April.

The Botanical Gardens are in the southwest corner of the University's grounds and are very interesting for a sight-seeing tour. Volunteers are working on Friday morning from 9:00 til 12:00 and Fred Essig would be happy to show anyone around who wishes to visit at that time. He is also looking for volunteers to work on Friday 9:00 to 12:00 and to start up a Saturday morning work crew.

If you are interested in volunteering to clean up and help propagate cuttings and work with plants, you may call him at 974-2359 or 974-2329 for further information.

At our next regular monthly meeting, we will have a sign-up sheet for those in working in April at our sales and display tables. Those of you who do not intend to be at the next meeting may contact Bob Heath for further information at 879-6349 in the daytime and 289-1068 in the evening.

* * *

Recipe of the Month: Walnut Crispies

Cream together: 1 cup butter and 2 1/2 cups packed brown sugar
 Add 2 beaten eggs, beating well
 Add (sifted) 2 1/2 cup flour, 1/4 tsp salt, 1/2 tsp baking soda
 Add 1 cup chopped walnuts
 Drop from a teaspoon onto a greased cookie sheet
 Bake at 350° for about 15 minutes
 Makes about 5 dozen cookies

Tom Economou announces that he and Gene Joyner will be leading another fabulous Fruit and Flower safari to Costa Rica this coming July. For complete details please contact him at NATURE TRAIL, Inc., Box 450662, Miami, FL 33245. Telephone (305)265-7173.

PLANT RAFFLE :January

<u>PLANT NAME</u>	<u>DONOR</u>	<u>WINNER</u>
Plantain	F. Honeycutt	P. Kotapski
Plantain	F. Honeycutt	Jim Murrie
Tamarind	F. Honeycutt	B. Pearson
Tamarind	F. Honeycutt	L. Figueroa
Surinam Cherry	F. Honeycutt	B. Pearson
Mint	F. Pupello	Glen Myrie
Mint	F. Pupello	Alice Beasor
Papaya (2)	Heath	Laverne Kotapski
Papaya (2)	Heath	?
Tree Tomato	Heath	B. Pearson
Tree Tomato	Heath	S. Pearson
Tree Basil	Heath	Laverne Kotapski
Tamarind	E. Freedman	Laverne Kotapski
Kiwi (female)	C. Novak	Carol Brown
Kiwi (male)	C. Novak	?
Cattleya guava (red)	C. Novak	Walter Vines
Cattleya guava (yellow)	C. Novak	Louis Figueroa
Chayote (X3)	Stark	Glen Myrie
Chayote	Stark	Janet Conard
Chayote	Stark	Nancy McCormack
Chayote	Stark	Al Jean
Chayote (X2)	Stark	Rome Vaccaro
Chayote	B. Beasor	Connie Price
Chayote	B. Beasor	Laverne Kotapski
Chayote	B. Beasor	Sherry Pearson
Chayote	B. Beasor	Al Jean
Chayote (X2)	B. Beasor	?
Papaya	B. Beasor	P. Kotapski
Hot Pepper	B. Beasor	Laverne Kotapski
Parsely	B. Beasor	N. McCormack
Parsely	B. Beasor	Jim Murrie
Parsely	B. Beasor	Janet Conard
Parsely	B. Beasor	Creggan Gjestland
Parsely	B. Beasor	Heath
Parsely	B. Beasor	Stark
Parsely	B. Beasor	Al Jean
Surinam Cherry	B. Beasor	Creggan Gjestland
Surinam Cherry	B. Beasor	Louis Figueroa
Surinam Cherry	B. Beasor	Al Jean
Surinam Cherry (X 2)	B. Beasor	?
Loquat	L. Shipley	B. Pearson
Loquat	L. Shipley	Leo Cotter
Celeste Fig	JoAnn Cimino	?

Hospitality Table: January

Lottice Shipley: Deli Tray (cheese, pickles,franks,apples, crackers)
 Nancy McCormack: Guava cheese danish
 Alice Beasor: dehydrated Carambola
 Janet Conard & Al Roberts: Friendship Cake
 Pat Jean: Walnut crispies

* * * * * D U E S D U E N O T I C E * * * * *

ANNUAL DUES ARE DUE BY MARCH 31, 1991. THE DUES ARE, AS THEY HAVE BEEN, \$15.00 FOR THE YEAR. DUES MAY BE PAID AT THIS OR THE NEXT MEETING, OR BY MAIL, TO THE NEWSLETTER ADDRESS (SEE FRONT). REMEMBER, YOUR DUES ARE THE PRIMARY FUNDING FOR THIS OUTSTANDING NEWSLETTER. (CHECKS SHOULD BE MADE OUT TO RFCI.)

* * * *

NATIVE FLORIDA PLANTS

SPINY AMARANTH (*Amaranthus spinosus*). This common weed is abundant in old cultivated fields. It is used as collard greens would be and is cooked the same way. It is best when collected in the spring before it flowers; if not, the flowers and tough stem should be discarded before cooking.

GOPHER APPLE (*Licania michauxii*). The fruits of this plant are eaten raw. They are similar to the Cocoplum fruits. Gopher apple grows in the pine-lands and is not very common.

Rare Fruit Council
Tampa Bay Chapter
313 Pruett Rd.
Seffner FL 33584



FIRST CLASS MAIL

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