



NEWSLETTER

JUNE 1991

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

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE: BOB HEATH
THERESA HEATH
ARNOLD STARK
LILLIAN STARK

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

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

NEXT MEETING JUNE 9, 1991

MEETING PLACE. . RARE FRUIT COUNCIL INTERNATIONAL CLUBHOUSE. 313 Pruett Rd.,
Seffner. Take I-4 to Exit 8 North, S.R. 579, go one mile to
Pruett Rd. (See McDonald School sign), turn right (East). Go
one mile. See clubhouse on left immediately past McDonald School.

PROGRAM . . . At this printing we are not certain what our program will be. We
have two potential speakers -one on Passion Fruit and one on an
unknown topic. But in any event the talk should be informative.
We will also have our raffle and tasting table and an auction of
a Wampi tree.

TRIPS TRIPS TRIPS TRIPS

Tom Economou will be leading a Costa Rica Fruit & Flower Safari,
August 14-24. Phone:(305)285-7173

Gil Whitton will be leading a Flower & Garden Tour of Great Britain,
September 3-18. Phone(813)968-5570

Tropical Ag Fiesta'91 will be July 13-14 at the Fruit & Spice Park,
24801 SW 187 Ave, Homestead, FL

VOLUNTEER HELP WANTED VOLUNTEER HELP WANTED

We need someone to construct a door and fix the roof on one of the
storage sheds on our club property. Help is also needed to clean up
some small rock scattered over the drainfield, which also needs to
have the surface leveled. Also needed in someone to mow the field.
Please call Arnold Stark (813)621-4987.

Message from the President: It has been so nice and comfortable
having our meetings at our own place. I'd like to thank those of
you you stayed to help clean up and put things in order after the
last meeting. And I'd again like to complement Charles Novak for a
great seed exchange set up. Charles will be collecting small
donations (both money and seed) so that he can expand the variety of
seeds available to us. This is a very exciting program from which
we can all benefit. We also hope to arrange some propagation
(grafting, etc) programs in the not too distant future. A reminder:
the big tree sale is coming October 13, and it is not too soon to
start your plants for sale then.

THANK YOU THANK YOU THANK YOU THANK YOU

Janet Conard- for crafting a beautiful speaker's podium for our club
 Jim & Joan Murrie, and Bobbie Puls for your donations to our
 building fund (There's still room for YOU on our benefactors list!
 Please join the growing group of people whom we have had the
 pleasure of thanking, and send in your contribution NOW).

PLANT RAFFLE : MAY

<u>PLANT NAME</u>	<u>DONOR</u>	<u>WINNER</u>
Papayas (4)	Janet Conard	Jim Murrie
Papayas (4)	Janet Conard	B. Pearson (2)
Papayas (4)	Janet Conard	M. Brandies
Papayas (4)	Janet Conard	Paul Zmoda
Papayas (4)	Janet Conard	Ted Langley (2)
Papayas (4)	Al Roberts	B. Pearson
Papayas (4)	Al Roberts	S. Pearson
Papayas (4)	Al Roberts	Leo Cotter
Papayas (4)	Al Roberts	Bob Went
Papayas (4)	Al Roberts	M. Pueckler
Papayas (4)	Al Roberts	Paul Zmoda
Papayas (4)	Al Roberts	? (2)
Loofa	Janet Conard	Charles Novak
Loofa	Janet Conard	M. Brandies
Ponderosa Lemon fruit	George Merrill	Heath (2)
Cherimoya	Charles Novak	Walter Vines
Elderberry (FL)	Walter Vines	M. Pueckler
Elderberry (FL)	Walter Vines	B. Pearson
Elderberry (FL)	Walter Vines	Paul Zmoda
Tomatilla	Heath	Jim Murrie
Chaya	Heath	Bob Went
Tree Tomato	Heath	B. Pearson
Jelly Palm	Heath	F. Honeycutt
Grumichama	Heath	Monica Brandies
Plum	Honeycutt	Nancy McCormack
Plum	Honeycutt	Walter Vines
Plantain	Honeycutt	M. Pueckler
Carissa (Natal Plum)	Honeycutt	M. Brandies
Surinam cherry	Brandies	Ted Langley
Seminole Pumpkin seedling	Brandies	? (3)
Celeste Fig	Honeycutt	Leo Cotter
Kadota Fig	Honeycutt	Ted Langley
Kadota Fig	Honeycutt	Bob Went
Kadota Fig	Honeycutt	?
Tamarind Seedling	Honeycutt	M. Brandies
Sweet potato cuttings	McCormack	? (2)
Aloe plant	McCormack	?
Lemon Grass	Lloyd Shipley	M. Pueckler
Loquat	Lloyd Shipley	Charles Novak

Hospitality Table: May

Janet Conard: Banana Cookies, Papaya Juice

Joan Murrie: Surinam Cherry Cake

Paul Zmoda: Passion Fruit

Nancy McCormack: Cheese & Crackers

Jud Newcombe: Amish Friendship Bread, Amish Friendship Carob Bread

TROPICAL FRUIT FOR THE SMALL HOME GARDEN

by Gene Joyner

Gene opened his presentation with a hardy compliment on our new home, agreed that it had great potential and suggested that we would be very proud of our facility as it developed. He also mentioned that we had, across the access road on the southwest corner of our property, what might be the state champion wild muscadine grape vine, which has a diameter of maybe 10", certainly the largest grape vine he has ever seen.

He also invited all of us to come down Saturday, June 29, for the annual Tropical Fruit Festival at the Mounds Extension Service Office in West Palm Beach. It will be a large show of all kinds of tropical fruit in the pavilion at their tropical gardens. They will have a variety of lectures throughout the day, starting at 10:00 a.m. There will also be a fruit tree sale in addition to the tropical fruit show. Also, July 13th and 14th is the date of the Tropical Ag Fiesta at the Fruit & Spice Park in Homestead. This is an extensive display of fruit trees and there will also be commercial nurseries selling fruit trees.

Gene indicated that he was trying to limit his subject at this meeting to tropical fruit for small landscape because so many of our members do not have large acreage to plant large trees. So we need to give thought to trees that are naturally smaller or can be kept smaller or can be planted in pots for the small landscape and still get plenty of fruit.

Bananas are raised as far north as Gainesville but the further north you go, of course, the more likely they are to get frozen down in cold winters. However, many types of bananas can be frozen to the ground in January and be up flowering and fruiting again in September or October, so cold winters should not discourage us from growing them. Even with minimal protection of the trunk, they will leaf out again and continue growing. The first slide he showed was a dense clump of banana trees which is a nice way to have them, a nice dense patch of many trees, but even if we only have room for one or two, or can grow them in containers and take them indoors during freezes, they are still a valuable tree for the landscape. They give a very tropical effect, because when you see bananas, of course, you know you're in the tropics. Bananas are very showy and some have very ornamental flowers which we were able to see in the next two or three slides.

The pink velvet banana has a very pretty flower but produces a fruit that is not edible, being filled with little black seeds about the size of BB's and almost as hard, hard enough to break a tooth if you crunch down on one of them. The wild seedy bananas in the tropical forests are eaten by the monkeys, parrots and other birds. All of the commercial varieties, of course, are mutations and are entirely seedless. The so-called blood banana has very showy leaves, wine red coloring on the underside of the leaf and a marbling of wine red and green on the tops of the leaves.

His next slide showed the variegated banana from Hawaii. The leaves and also the fruit are variegated. The fruit is about the size of a Cavendish and has beautiful dark and light green stripes which remain that way even to maturity. It is a good tasting banana and it's really a novelty to see this banana with its pretty striped fruit and leaves.

The next slide showed a stalk of the apple banana which is not a commercial variety because it has a thin skin and does not ship well. As a dooryard fruit, though, they are excellent with a very tasty flesh. The fruit, unfortunately, has a habit of splitting during rainy weather. Stalks on a good healthy tree will be approximately 40 to 50 pounds, which is certainly a good sized stalk.

Cavendish is also a very popular banana and produces fruit more like those we see in the supermarkets. It's a short tree, 6 to 8 feet tall. The fruit on the Cavendish never turn completely yellow as we expect bananas to do, but remain a light yellowish

green when ripe. As soon as you see them turning color and getting soft, they need to be eaten. The Cavendish produces a bunch of about 75 pounds with about 8 to 10 hands. There are several varieties of Cavendish, the Giant Cavendish which grows to about 10 or 12 feet, and the regular Cavendish and a couple of other varieties.

The next slide Gene showed us was a bunch of bananas, a commercial variety, outside his window in West Palm. The bunch of bananas took about 5 months to ripen and weighed about 140 pounds. The top 3 hands had over 30 bananas in each hand and all the bananas were commercial supermarket variety size. The trunk of this tree grows 8 to 10 inches in diameter to support the heavy stalks of bananas.

The next slide showed the dwarf Jamaican Red. The fruit comes out wine red and stays wine red even as they mature. They get a little lighter colored as they ripen but it's difficult to tell when they're ripe except by feel. When they're soft, it's time to eat them, and they taste very similar to the other bananas.

His next slide showed a market place in South America with 4 to 6 varieties of red bananas on display. The ice cream banana or Bluefield has a very pretty blue blush to the skin as it ripens. The flesh is very soft and custard like, probably the softest of any bananas. It's strictly a dooryard fruit since it doesn't ship well. It grows on about an 18 foot tree and can be eaten fresh or fried like plantains.

The Maimaoli comes from Hawaii and is probably the most unique in appearance, turning yellow almost 3 weeks before it is ready to eat, at which time it is similar to eating an unripe persimmon, very astringent, but when ripe it may be eaten fresh or cooked.

Plantains are the other major group of banana relatives and basically they have more starch content and can be recognized by the more angular appearance of the fruit. People frequently cut their bananas and plantains too green and while they will ripen if they're mature, the best quality results from letting them ripen on the tree.

The Orinoco is the most popular plantain and is said to take about 2 or 3 more degrees of cold without damage. The bunches on the Orinoco are 40 to 50 pounds, a large stocky type fruit, very good for baking, frying or even eating out of hand.

The chicken egg, sometimes called pregnant banana because of their peculiar shape, is another variety of plantain. They're frequently almost as thick as they are long, maybe as much as 4" long and 3" in diameter.

The rhinoceros or African horn plantain is the biggest fruit in the plantain group, getting up to as much as 22" in length. All bananas and plantains are well suited to growing in central Florida because even if they are badly damaged by cold, they will come back in the spring, or they may be grown in 20 gallon tubs and taken indoors in freezing weather. They will fruit in containers.

If you would like to see what is probably the largest collection of different varieties of bananas, the place to go is the Fruit & Spice Park, with somewhere in the neighborhood of 60 different types of bananas. Chris Rollins has been exchanging banana species with some Central and South American banana growers and he has many that are one of a kind in the United States.

Next Gene had some good slides of blackberries and blackberry plants. He said that some people have horror stories about blackberries taking over their entire property but they can be contained, and the way Gene does it is by using galvanized corrugated roofing tin, 30" long, embedded in the ground around them to keep the roots contained. He has kept his contained that way for over 15 years. They can also be contained by growing them as container plants.

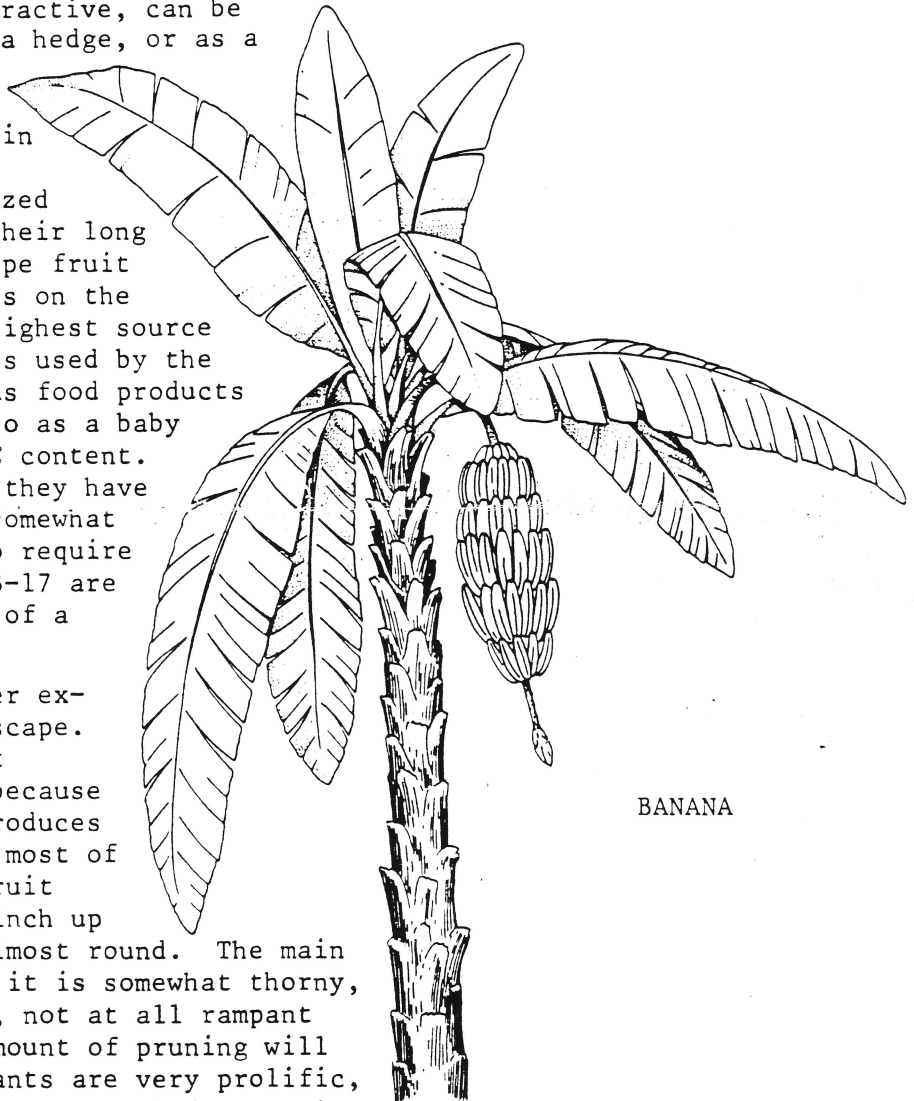
Brazo is probably the most common and popular variety and blooms from early March through June with nice big berries of high quality.

Blackberries do not require an awful lot of maintenance or fertilizer, but do require considerable watering during the dry season when the berries are developing. They are another small fruit that can be grown very satisfactorily in a small space or as potted plants. There are several relatively new varieties available for Florida, even as far south as Homestead. However, the further south you go, the more irregular the ripening becomes, so that you may have ripe berries and small green berries or even flowers on the bush at the same time. And of course if you have several blueberry bushes, this can be an advantage in that you get your fruit over an extended period of time rather than having them all at once in abundance and then gone. Gene's growing Florida Blue and Sharp Blue in his plantings in West Palm Beach. One of the most important criteria in growing blueberries is to have an acid soil; they will not grow well in soil with an acidity above 5 or so. They are a very nice plant, don't get too big, and can even be made into a hedge.

The Barbados Cherry is very attractive, can be grown as a shrub by itself, as a hedge, or as a container plant. It produces three or four crops every year, pretty little flowers followed in three or four weeks by the real showy, brilliant red, cherry sized fruit. Frequently because of their long bearing season, you may have ripe fruit and flowers and immature berries on the same plant. The fruit is the highest source of Vitamin C of any fruit and is used by the health food industry for various food products for a natural Vitamin C and also as a baby food additive for the Vitamin C content. They like a deep mulch because they have a shallow root system and are somewhat nematode susceptible so they do require this care. Florida Sweet and B-17 are two of the best name varieties of a number of good selections.

Carissa or natal plum is another excellent plant for a small landscape. It is a very common hedge plant especially on the beach areas because it is very salt tolerant. It produces showy little white flowers for most of the year and a beautiful red fruit varying in size from about an inch up to 2" and from elliptical to almost round. The main objection to the plant is that it is somewhat thorny, but it is a well behaved plant, not at all rampant and aggressive, so a minimum amount of pruning will keep it in good shape. Some plants are very prolific, others are very sparse bearing, so one needs to select from a good, prolific plant to take an air layer or cuttings. The fruit is entirely edible except for a few small seeds, and makes excellent jams and jellies and a delicious ice cream.

Another carissa from Egypt is the Carissa Karanda. It tends to be viney like a bougainvillea in that it can be kept pruned into a bush or can be allowed to climb a fence or into a tree. The next slide showed a cluster of the fruit which are about the size of a muscadine grape, and if you disregarded the leaves, you might actually mistake them for a bunch of muscadines. In flavor they are similar to a blueberry with a quite excellent quality. The fruit are a deep purple black. The flowers are similar to the white flowers of the red carissa. The plants are much more difficult



BANANA

to find than the red carissa but if you can find it, it's well worth having because the flavor is even better than the red carissa. It grows very easily from cuttings as do the red carissa. It's not worth the effort to grow either one of the carissa from seeds because seedlings frequently have interior fruit. You are much better off to grow either carissa from cuttings or air layers from an excellent fruiting variety.

The pineapple guava or feijoa is probably more common in this area than it is down in Gene's area but it is grown all over Florida. In this area the feijoa is in bloom at this time, the flowers are very showy and a bush in heavy bloom is very beautiful. Also the flower petals are edible. When the fruit matures, it doesn't change color appreciably, staying that olive green color. The fruit is about the size of a small guava and very delicious with tiny seeds. The fruit falls from the tree when it's ripe so you go out every day and check under the tree for those fruit that have fallen, rather than picking them. The feijoa makes good jams and jellies and is excellent eaten fresh. One problem with the feijoa is that it is necessary to have two different varieties for a good fruit set.

The fig is another favorite which is available in this area and of course there are dozens of different varieties of figs. Gene had slides of many of them which come in two or three different colors and sizes. The major problem with figs is fig rust. They come out beautifully in the spring from their deciduous winter sleep and look beautiful until June or July when the rains get heavy, at which time the leaves spot brown and drop from the plant. A lot of nurseries carry the more common figs and they're quite easy to root from cuttings or from air layers. Most of the production from figs will be in early summer, although some figs will continue to produce fruit all the way up until September or October. However, if they are struck with the fig rust, they will have lost so many leaves as to make the fruit unpalatable, or tiny because there's not enough foliage to develop the fruit.

The Governor's Plum is another fruit that will grow here. It ripens during the summer months. It makes a rather large shrub, as tall as 15 to 20 feet. The fruit is about an inch in diameter and turns a dark reddish purple at maturity. The next slide showed the fruit intact and cut in half to show the orangish pulp with a few little seeds. It does taste somewhat like a plum which accounts for the name Governor's Plum. They make excellent jellies and jams and are good eaten fresh from the tree. The trees are male and female so it takes one of each to produce fruit and it is better to get your plant from air layers or cuttings in order to be sure that you have one of each sex. The plants grow well and produce abundantly under good conditions. The mature plants will take down to 27° or so without any damage, and damaged plants come back very rapidly in the spring.

The Jaboticaba from Brazil is another one that does well in this area. You need to be careful with the plant during the cold weather when it's young but when it gets up to fruiting size, it should take down to 27° without any damage. These are very upright, very small leaves, very attractive. Unfortunately, it is 6 to 10 years from seed to fruit. Flowers are borne along the trunk and larger branches from the ground all the way up and within 24 days after you see the flowers, you'll have mature fruit. Flowers may pop out at any time during the year and it seems to be correlated with moisture level. Anytime we get a spell of rainy weather, within a week we get a crop of blossoms. Gene has one large tree that regularly fruits 7 or 8 times a year. You can expect some rather large crops throughout the year, and the fruit is very unique because they look like grapes growing along the trunk. They are dark purplish black, about an inch in diameter. The fruit is used for jellies, jams, wines, pies, ice cream. They also freeze well, up to 6 or 8 months, and when they are thawed out, you would never know the difference. They also work very well as container plants. While in the ground as a mature tree, you can expect it to take about 26° temperature without damage.

The macadamia nut is another tree that is very popular in our area. The trees will grow to about 40 feet. It flowers in February through the end of April in the Palm Beach area, maybe a little later in the Tampa area, with long white spikes of flowers as Gene indicated in the next slide. It forms the nut clusters that ripen the following winter and once they are ripe, like most northern nuts, pecans, walnuts, etc., they fall off the tree. The nut inside is a round solid nut which is what

you eat. They have a very hard woody shell which takes a special nutcracker or the vise or hammer to crack. Of course, you have to fight off all the squirrels within a half mile of your house because they will come swarming in to eat these nuts even before they are ripe.

Miracle fruit is a fun plant which you can use to surprise your guests. It is a small plant which will always remain in the pot since it is very tender and does very well as a potted plant. The fruit are bright red, 3/4" long with a large seed, with certainly not much to recommend it as a fruit on its own. But when you eat the berry, chew on it a minute or two, and dispose of the seed, you find that your sour taste buds have been deadened and any fruit you eat, limes, lemons and such, becomes very sweet. You can have fun with your friends who are not familiar with the miracle fruit by letting them experience this with a lime or lemon. The affect wears off very rapidly and your taste buds are back to normal in 30 or 40 minutes. It's definitely a novelty plant, will never get very large, very slow growing and makes an excellent gift for friends who don't have the tree.

Mulberry is another fruiting tree that lots of people like and which grows very well in central Florida since it is not strictly a tropical tree. It grows very easily from cuttings and air layers. The black mulberry is the most common kind we see around. Occasionally you'll see the red mulberry or the white which are not as good quality of fruit. Just don't plant the tree where it will eventually hang over sidewalks or driveways because the fruit are bad about staining, and when the tree is in fruit, you can expect every bird in the neighborhood to be in your tree. However, if you have problems with birds getting your blueberries and other fruit, the planting of a mulberry will frequently save a lot of your blueberries. Mulberries can be cut back for a time to a 6 or 8 foot bush to make the mulberries easy to pick, or the tree may be allowed to grow into a 30 to 40 foot tree.

Another plant very easy to grow is the pineapple and the pineapple can be grown as a pot plant in 3 gallon or larger containers which allows you to bring them indoors during a freeze. Of course, if they are in the ground, they are fairly easy to cover because of their small size, particularly if you trim back the leaves. Plants in pots will do very well with about a half day's sun. Planted in the ground and mulched, they can take a full day's sun. The plant takes a lot of fertilizer and water and they should be allowed to ripen on the plant for the best quality because as we know, the moment the pineapple is cut, it begins to deteriorate in quality. Pineapples may be propagated from the crown off the top of the pineapple but this is the poorest and the slowest part of the pineapple to produce fruit. Rattoons from the base of the plant and slips from just below the fruit are the best source of propagating material. The recommended way of fertilizing the pineapple plant is to pour a liquid fertilizer such as Peter's 20-20-20 in solution right into the growing heart of the plant. After the pineapple plant produces a fruit, the plant will die and the slips or rattoons should be taken as you remove the fruit and propagate these. There are several species of pineapple that do very well in Florida. Some are ornamental and produce relatively poor fruit; others produce excellent fruit for eating.

The white sapote is another tree that does very well here and will take temperatures down to about 26° without any appreciable damage. The tree has its major crop in the spring and then will bloom again and have a smaller crop in the fall. The fruit has very little color change as it matures, getting slightly lighter in green and a little yellowish color. The pulp inside is a light yellow with three or four seeds about the size of one finger joint. They are an excellent dooryard fruit, eaten fresh from the tree, or made into breads, ice cream or other desserts; soft, melting, custard-like flesh in a fruit that frequently attains the size of an orange. There are several name varieties available and they're easy to graft and to air layer.

The woolly leaf white sapote is a slightly larger form attaining the size of a large navel orange. It is a very similar tree except that on the underside of the leaf, has a woolly appearance.

The wampi is another tree that is more cold hardy, comes from South China and will produce a tree of maybe 25 feet tall. The fruit is produced in clusters at the ends of the branches and look like longans or a cluster of muscadine grapes and as a matter of fact, some people describe the wampi as a lime flavored grape that grows on a tree. It is a citrus relative, hence, the lemon-lime flavor, in texture and characteristics similar to a grape but with a much tougher skin. The fruit can be used for drinks, jellies and ice cream or eaten out of hand. The tree can be kept small, under 10 feet, by trimming, and still get a lot of fruit production. Gene indicated that some people have had wampis to take temperatures in the low 20's with no damage at all, but exactly how cold hardy they are is not known.

The grumichama, cousin of the surinam cherry, comes from the same region of Brazil. The tree tends to have a more upright growth than the surinam cherry and fruits in April and May. It is an easy to grow plant and fruits in about the third year from seed and grows very well in a container. Fruit grows in clusters all over the tree. It is purplish-black when ripe, flavor reminiscent of the northern cherry, high quality with one small white seed, fruit ranging in size from 1/2" to 1" in diameter on better selections, and may have as many as three crops in the spring, thru April, May and into June. From seed it takes 3 or 4 years to fruiting, and does very well in a container.

The pitomba is another of the same species from South America, a real pretty yellowish orange fruit, which has one crop a year in the spring and are just now ripening in the West Palm area. The tree can get up to 20 feet in height, the fruit is about 1-1/2 inches long, light colored flesh reminiscent of an apricot or a plum, a very good out of hand fruit, makes good fruit leather, jellies and juice and likewise takes about four years from seed to fruit. It's a very slow growing shrub or tree and will take down to around 25° without leaf damage, so should do very well in central Florida in protected areas.

(... continued next month...)

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