



# NEWSLETTER

JULY 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 THE 2ND SUNDAY OF THE MONTH AT 2:00 P.M.

NEXT MEETING . . . . . JULY 14, 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 . . . . . UNUSUAL CITRUS VARIETIES BY PAMELA GILMORE.  
Pamela manages the Dade City Nursery and grows  
some lesser known citrus varieties with which  
she will acquaint us. She will also have potted  
samples to show and discuss. This should be an  
interesting program on a species that does so well  
in central Florida.  
We will also have our usual raffle and tasting  
table and a fruiting sized Jabotacaba to auction.  
Be there!

## Hospitality Table: June

Joan Murrie: mini-blueberry muffins  
Stark: carambola jam & crackers  
Pat Jean: Peanut Butter Cookies  
T. Heath: Banana Chocolate Chip Cookies  
Al Roberts: Papaya Pie, Santo Domingo Papaya Cobbler

New Member: Quay Gray 113 W. Strickland St. Plant City, FL 33566  
(813)754-3361

THANK YOU      THANK YOU      THANK YOU

Al & Pat Jean for a nice contribution to our building fund. (Have you  
made your building fund donation yet? Your Tampa Bay RFCI is counting  
on you for support!)

Aloha Palms Nursery (members Donna Livenspire and Michelle Pueckler) for  
a lovely Jelly Palm for our planting area.

Bob Heath for donating the beautiful Wampii for our first ever plant  
auction. The winner of this lovely specimen was Frank Pupello. And  
thanks to all members who participated in the bidding

## PASSION FLOWERS AND THEIR FRUIT by Paul Zmoda

Paul began his discussion of passion flowers and fruit by a discussion of propagation and how he deals with it. The genus of passion flowers is *passiflora* and there are well over 100 species and numerous uncounted strains but he only had a couple of different kinds of fruit and flowers to display. The passion flower tends to grow in the tropics and sub-tropics of the world with there being a couple of native varieties. *Passiflora suberosa* is a flower less than an inch in diameter and pale green in color and a fruit that is smaller than a grape. It's self pollinating and attractive to butterflies. The other native variety is a *passiflora incarnata*, commonly called the "maypop". He had brought in for display an extremely rare white flowered form of the maypop. It has just this week started blooming so Paul had no idea what the fruiting characteristics would be.

Passion flowers are very daylight sensitive. You can almost tell time by when they open. Each different species has a different time schedule for opening and closing. As the flower opens, the fruit is visible as a small oval body in the middle of the flower. The maypop self-propagates by sending up shoots from the roots. The problem with non-native varieties brought to Florida is pollination. With some it is self-incompatibility, which means that the pollen is sterile or the flower is sterile and will not cross with anything. A second problem may be that the pollinating insects in the plant's native setting are not available. If the insect is not pollinating the flowers, then it may be necessary to hand pollinate in order to set fruit. Simply remove one of the three anthers in one flower and touch it gently to the stamen or female part of the flower, or on the same flower with self-compatible species. Hand pollination should be performed immediately after the flower opens in the morning because there seems to be a narrow window when the female parts are receptive. At that point you may put a plastic bag around the flower to protect it from damage or rain. In two to three days if conditions are right, you will note that the green body in the flower, the ovary, will have started to swell. This is an indication that fertilization has occurred. However, if it fails to swell and turns yellow, you know the flower will fall off and you've lost the fruit. The fruit will probably reach full size by the end of the third week. The fruit grows very rapidly to full size but requires some additional time to reach maturity. For fertilizer, Paul suggests using compost and animal manures and acid fertilizer such as used on azaleas and blueberries because the passion fruit seems to prefer a slightly acid soil.

Some other fruit that Paul is working with include *passiflora edulis*, which occasionally you can find in the supermarkets. It is a purple fruit about the size of a small chicken egg, only round. The plant has three-lobed leaves and is self-pollinating. *Passiflora passicarpa*, which means yellow body, is a similar species with a yellow fruit slightly larger than the *edulis*. They are self-compatible, so they will cross with themselves and cross with others. Both of these are propagated by seeds, stem cuttings and root cuttings. The seeds are planted quite shallow, only a quarter inch deep or so, in a potting soil, vermiculite or peat moss. The seeds may sprout readily or take up to a year to sprout. For planting, Paul recommends soaking the seeds overnight in water. The newly sprouted plants are subject to damping off and should always be planted in a sterile medium.

Propagation by cuttings is simpler than most people realize. Passion fruit vines are viney plants with tendrils for attaching to other things. Take cuttings below the growing tip, and use wood that is beginning to firm up. At the bottom, cut just below a node and at the top leave one or two leaves to feed the cutting. Insert the cutting into a 3" deep bed of vermiculite. In four to six weeks, there should be new growth at the top and enough roots to transplant into potting soil.

Leaf cutter bees are one of the prime pollinators for passion flowers and you can tell if you have leaf cutter bees by noting leaves that have cut-outs, perfectly

round near the edge of the leaves in the area. Carpenter bees are also a pollinator. They look like the black and yellow bumblebee but are much shinier and somewhat smaller. Other insects are probably also pollinators.

The passion fruit grows on a vine and it's a definite climber. It will grow on fences, trellises, arbors and up trees, living and dead. Instead of cutting down your dead tree, you can grow a vine on it and make it look alive.

The name "passion flower" comes from the passion of Christ. There are five sepals and five petals which represent the ten apostles that were at the Crucifixion. The female parts of the flower represent the nails, the five pollen bearing parts represent the five wounds, the corolla represents the crown of thorns. All passion flowers of every different variety have this same basic structure. The leaves on different varieties may be single lobed, three-lobed, five-lobed or with scalloped edges or smooth edges, a tremendous variety of different leaf shapes.

The nice thing about passion fruit is that when they become mature, they fall from the vine and it is merely necessary to pick them up off the ground. They are relatively light and have a hard shell which prevents injury when they fall. Otherwise, fruit growing up a large oak tree 50 feet in the air or so would be completely unattainable. After the fruit fall, they may be kept for a few days until they begin to wrinkle, at which time they are at their peak and may be cut open and eaten. The main commercial use of passion fruit is as juice, in mixtures such as Hawaiian punch and various other combinations.

\* \* \* \*

Speaker's Talk Continued From Last Month: Tropical Fruit for the Small Home Garden  
by Gene Joyner

Sugar apple is an anona and can be grown here in protected areas or as a potted plant. The fruit is very delicious and should be picked when it begins to get a light yellowish blush which develops within a few days of maturity. These are basically summer and fall fruit, developing from August on into November. The tree will grow to 20 feet and is deciduous. In the spring they come out with new growth and flowers and right now, they should have small developing fruit. The fruit has a lot of black seeds but most people don't mind that because of the quality of the flesh. They're definitely a dessert fruit, eaten out of hand or in ice creams or other desserts.

The hybrid between a sugar apple and a cherimoya is the atemoya, the most popular variety of which is the gefner. The fruit is normally slightly larger than a sugar apple and has fewer seeds, although they are usually larger. The flesh is a little firmer than the sugar apple, very sweet, high quality, and makes the atemoya a little better for shipping, so many nurseries in the Homestead area that have the atemoya in production sell the fruit. They are almost all shipped out of state to northern markets.

\* \* \* \*

BLUEBERRIES (taken from Marion County Extension Service publication)

Think of a fruit that could be all things to nearly all people; one that actually thrives on an occasional winter cold snap and adapts readily to central Florida's acid soil conditions. One that tastes delicious fresh, or as an addition to baked treats, or as jam or jelly, or as a flavor of ice cream.

Try the blueberry - it's all those things... plus!

(continued...)

By selecting early and late fruiting varieties, and varieties that cross pollinate well, you can enjoy fresh berries for as long as six weeks in late spring and early summer. And the fruit can be frozen, canned or preserved to extend your enjoyment for an even longer period.

Blueberries were for a long time a "northern" crop in states like Michigan and New Jersey. With the development of "rabbiteye" varieties, however, it became possible to grow the berries in warmer climates. Those rabbiteye varieties that do well here grow to heights of four to ten feet.

Blueberries should be planted in soil with a pH value in the range of 4.0 to 5.2. The soil should be well-drained and should have good water and nutrient holding capacities. For small plantings, these factors can be adjusted to an extent. Soil pH can be raised with the addition of lime. Lowering pH is more difficult but is possible, by adding elemental sulfur, preferably on a plant-by-plant basis. The addition of organic matter will increase water and nutrient holding capacities and at the same time tend to raise pH, if that is desirable. If the water table is too high, blueberries can be planted in raised beds.

Blueberries need plentiful water when fruit is developing, so be prepared to furnish it artificially if drought conditions warrant.

Rabbiteye blueberries require cross pollination between different cultivars for acceptable yields. A minimum of two different cultivars that bloom together must be interplanted. Even higher yields can be expected when three or more compatible cultivars are interplanted. Also, select cultivars on the basis of early and late maturation to extend the harvesting time. A table to aid in cultivar selection is presented at the end of this article.

Plants are available from most nurseries that cater to small homeowner orchards. Choose field grown

plants about two years old with well-developed root systems, rather than full, leafy tops. Do select lively, vibrant plants with no outward sign of disease or pest problems.

The planting site should be sunny and away from the roots of all trees except pine. If the pH is 5.5 or below, put 1/4 cubic foot of moist Canadian peat moss in the bottom of each hole. If the pH is above 5.5, dig a large hole and put at least 1/2 cubic foot of peat beneath and around the foot of each plant. Keep plants heavily mulched with pine straw, pine bark, or oak leaves, but don't use grass clippings (they take up nitrogen).

Plant blueberry bushes with about 12 feet between rows. Leave no more than 6 feet between plants in the row. Blueberries send up lots of suckers, so cultural practices over several seasons should tend to influence mature plantings to expand into hedgerows.

Good weed control is one of the most important cultural practices for blueberries, so eliminate as many weed problems as possible in advance. Work the planting site well, raking out weeds and roots almost as you would for a seed bed. And plan from the first to maintain the soil around berry bushes in that condition continually.

In addition to striving for a weed-free environment, mulch heavily with pine needles, pine bark or oak leaves. This will not only retard weed germination; but it will conserve plant moisture, maintain lower pH levels and generally benefit soil conditions.

Because it is a relatively new crop, blueberry disease and pest problems are minor. The most aggravating problem will be birds, particularly in small plantings in urban areas. Probably the most effective protection is use of nylon or plastic nets draped across plants at fruiting time.



The primary goal in fertilizing blueberries is to promote rapid vegetative growth in young plants (usually the first three growing seasons) and heavy fruiting thereafter. Mild fertilizer injury is indicated by brown colored leaf spots, particularly around leaf margins and on younger leaves. More severe fertilizer burn causes leaf drop and possibly plant death. The bushes should not be fertilized when the leaves are wet, because even small amounts of granular fertilizer that stick to leaves and dissolve in water can burn leaves.

A practical fertilizing schedule for new plants starts with plants set out ideally in December. Do not fertilize at planting. On February 1, an azalea-camellia fertilizer mix (approximately 5-10-10 with the nitrogen mainly in the ammonium form or in the form of water soluble N) should be broadcast evenly over a circle of 2 foot diameter around the plant, using one ounce per plant. Six weeks later, plants should be fertilized with ammonium sulfate, using 3/4 ounce per plant in a two-foot circle. Ammonium sulfate should be used at 3/4 ounce per plant three more times during the growing season, approximately on May 15, July 1 and Sept. 1. Be sure plants get water equal to 0.5 inch of rainfall between feedings.

During the second year the same schedule should be followed, except use 1 ounce of fertilizer per plant broadcast over a three foot circle. In the following seasons, the same general schedule should be followed, allowing for poor or undesirable response to previous feedings and possible changes in soil pH levels, brought about by previous fertilizer practices or watering with high pH water. Watch for symptoms of iron deficiency (intervenial leaf chlorosis) and correct by use of proper micronutrients.

Blueberries should be pruned by removing 50% of the top at the time of planting and all flower buds should be removed. One year later, plants should be pruned to remove all flowers before they begin to develop into fruit. Fruit production during the first two years can slow the growth of the plant and should be prevented by pruning. No further pruning will be necessary until the plants get too large for easy fruit harvest. Then detailed pruning to promote high yields and plant vigor should begin. This involves removal of dead or damaged wood, removal of weak, twiggy growth and selective removal of older canes to promote bush renewal. Schedule pruning activities after fruit harvest.

Recommended rabbiteye cultivars:

Early season - Sharpblue & Misty

Mid-season - Aliceblue & Beckyblue

Late season - Woodard, Bluebelle & Delite



PLANT RAFFLE :June

| <u>PLANT NAME</u>    | <u>DONOR</u>  | <u>WINNER</u>          |
|----------------------|---------------|------------------------|
| Pineapple Guava      | RFCI          | Bruce Pearson          |
| Pineapple Guava      | RFCI          | Janet Conard           |
| Yellow Guava         | RFCI          | ?                      |
| Blueberry            | Jim Murrie    | Tanaka                 |
| Blueberry            | Jim Murrie    | Nancy McCormack        |
| Kiwi                 | Charles Novak | Bob Went               |
| Cattleya Guava       | Charles Novak | Bob Went               |
| Chaya                | Honeycutt     | M. <del>Knackler</del> |
| Chaya                | Honeycutt     | F. Pupello             |
| Celeste Fig          | Honeycutt     | Al Hendry              |
| Papaya, pink         | Honeycutt     | M. Luxenberg           |
| Papaya, pink         | Honeycutt     | Susie Maddox           |
| Papaya, pink         | Honeycutt     | Alice Burhenn          |
| Papaya, peach        | Honeycutt     | M. Luxenberg           |
| Kadota Fig           | Honeycutt     | M. Pueckler            |
| Kadota Fig           | Honeycutt     | N. McCormack           |
| Yuca                 | Heath         | N. McCormack           |
| Chaya                | Heath         | M. Graff               |
| Chaya                | Heath         | Al Roberts             |
| Tree Basil           | Heath         | B. Pul                 |
| Costa Rican Guava    | Heath         | Susie Maddox           |
| Rangoon creeper seed | B. Puls       | ?                      |
| Sweet Potatoes       | N. McCormack  | ?                      |
| Lemon Balm           | Alice Burhenn | Al Hendry              |
| Lemon Balm           | Alice Burhenn | Heath                  |
| Lemon Balm           | Alice Burhenn | Al Jean                |



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