



NEWSLETTER JANUARY 1992

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

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE: BOB HEATH
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ARNOLD STARK
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PRESIDENT: LILLIAN STARK

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(INCLUDING RENEWALS)

MEETINGS ARE HELD THE 2nd SUNDAY OF THE MONTH AT 2:00 p.m.

NEXT MEETING JANUARY 12, 1992

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

PROGRAM. . . . This month DR. FRANK MARTIN will honor us with a talk on
FRUIT GROWING IN SRI LANKA. Dr. Martin is a retired
scientist from the United States Division of Agriculture and is a speaker of
considerable knowledge and interest. His talk will be accompanied by a slide show.
This promises to be an exceptionally interesting talk for all of us. Also, we
will have our usual delicious tasting table and the raffle with many interesting
fruit trees, and our Seed Board and Library will be available.

Hospitality Table: December

Stark: Cranberry Nut bread
Novak: Passion Fruit, kumquats
Joan Murrie: Cranberry Bars
Heath: Green Papaya Nut Bread; fruit platter
Pat Jean: Walnut Crispies Cookies
Monica Brandies: Argula-papaya Salad
Nancy McCormack: Carambolas

THANK YOU THANK YOU THANK YOU

Jim and Joan Murrie for the beautiful Walnut wood Pineapple
shape basket (hand-crafted by Jim) filled with goodies which they
donated to the club for auction. Al Hendry was the successful
bidder.

Bob Baker for his donation of a large trailer to the club.

The Fruit and Spice Park in South Florida is a delightful place
to visit with many things of interest to our members. We hope to
organize a group trip there, perhaps during the summer. Following
is a list of scheduled special events, if you can go on your on:

January 18 & 19	Arts & Crafts Festival
February 29 & March 1	Asian Festival
April 11 & 12	Thai New Year
July 11 & 12	Mango Festival

For more Information contact the park:

Fruit & Spice Park
2401 S.W. 187th Avenue
Homestead, FL 33031
(305)247-5727

STRAWBERRIES By Karl Butts

Karl Butts is the vegetable agent at the Hillsborough County Extension Service and brought us a very interesting picture of the strawberry as grown in Florida. Karl Butts is an authority on strawberries and is also involved with guavas, blueberries and other things that are in commercial production in this area. He provided a different perspective on the strawberry that we received from Dr. Craig Chandler when he spoke to us.

The strawberry is treated as a vegetable in Florida because it is grown in the same manner as vegetables, being planted as an annual and grown in rows in large fields. After the plants have fruited, they are either plowed under or removed from the plastic mulch to permit a second planting of other crops.

Strawberries have been around for a very long time and they are a very adaptable crop. It is amazing sometimes to realize under what adverse conditions they grow. They are widely adapted to almost any environment you can think of. They are a very hardy plant; strawberry growers will tell you it is almost impossible to kill a strawberry plant. However, in Florida it is necessary to spray the plant when it's fruiting to get a beautiful unblemished berry because of the climate we have here in Florida.

Karl showed us a book by some professors at the University of California, written on the history of the strawberry. It is very interesting to read about the strawberry and how it has been prized throughout the centuries because of its flavor and its juicy flesh, and in many places, because of its medicinal qualities. The fruit and roots and leaves have all been used in many concoctions for various diseases down through the centuries, and the fruit, of course, is very high in Vitamin C and the B vitamins and is a good source of soluble fiber. For centuries it was not cultivated but only gathered; it has been only since the 13th century that any cultivation has occurred. The strawberry is indigenous throughout the world in several different varieties. Here in the southeast, it is the Virginiana species that grows wild, and is the species which is one of the parents of our present commercial strawberry.

Charles V, the French monarch in 1368, is credited with cultivating strawberries with 12,000 strawberry plants in the Royal Gardens. And certain areas around Paris are still known for their strawberry production. The modern day strawberry is a hybrid.

The Woods strawberry or *Sragaria Vesca* is the strawberry found in Asia and Europe. When the explorers visiting the New World returned to Europe, they brought back the Virginiana species, which had a better flavor, was more prolific, fruited earlier in the year and fruited over a longer season. Then in the early 18th century a strawberry which produced a very large and very firm fruit was brought back to Europe from Chile. Unfortunately it wasn't very fruitful nor consistent. However, it was in a Chilean nursery that the cross accidentally occurred to produce the parent of our modern strawberry with the major characteristics now associated with the strawberry crop. The species is called the Pineapple strawberry or the *Ananassa* species. Most of the flowers are perfect flowers whereas its progenitor's flowers are frequently male or female and very few are perfect flowers to allow them to be self-fertile.

The largest state for strawberry production is California. They have about 18,000 acres of strawberries under cultivation and they produce strawberries pretty well year round, with the exception of December and January when almost no strawberries are harvested in California. The profitable production of strawberries is somewhat based on the length of season and that is one reason why we can grow them profitably in Florida because we have such a long season. The yield can be from 4000 to 4500 flats per acre. Also, it is well to note that strawberries are photo-periodic as far as fruit production is concerned, which means that fruiting is sensitive to the day length and tends to begin as the days shorten. The strawberry has a chemical

system that is photo-sensitive and triggers fruiting on short days but also has an interaction with temperature such that the cooler the temperature, the longer the day may be and still initiate fruiting. There are some varieties developed in California that are day neutral which means that they are not dependent on day length. The Selva variety which has dominated the market in Plant City in the last few years is more or less day neutral and pretty well 35 days after they set the plant, the growers will be in there filling their flats 35 to 40 per acre. This is when they seem to get their best prices, November and December. The growers need to make back what they have invested in their fields by the first of the year to have a good profit.

At this point Karl showed us some slides that he had taken of new advanced lines that are being evaluated in commercial fields and most of them look very good. Ours is a shipping market here. Most of the berries are not used locally but are shipped to the northeast and on up into Canada.

The Oso Grande is a California release and is being tried at this time in Florida. Also the Sea Escape is being tested. It is a day neutral berry. The Oso Grande makes a large bush which might make it more conducive to disease problems but the fruit are on long stems which gets them out from under the bush where fungus may develop. Berries up under the foliage may otherwise remain wet for longer periods of time. Also fungicide sprays can't get to the berries as well.

Some of the strawberries which he showed on the slides are Canadian produced plants. Growers buy plants produced in Canada for a couple of reasons. One reason is anthracnose which attacks all part of the strawberry plant and fruit and is a warm weather disease. So by growing them in Canada they are not getting anthracnose in their early development. Also in the northern climates they get some chilling even in the summertime and this is conducive to early fruiting, which is certainly what the growers are looking for.

In California for growing strawberries they use a clear plastic mulch. In central Florida we use a black plastic mulch.

Strawberries seem to bear on a six week cycle. At the proper time they'll put on a flush of berries and they'll come out very rapidly. The plant puts out one main flower which is the largest and at the base of that, two more flowers, the secondary flowers, and at the base of each of those, two more flowers, the tertiary flowers, and so on, with the berries getting progressively smaller as each cycle develops. So you get your largest fruit at the beginning of a cycle and then the fruit size decreases the further you proceed in that cycle.

The strawberry is not a true fruit. It's called a false fruit or an accessory fruit. A true fruit is a mature ovary and its accessory parts, which is what a tomato is, for instance. In the strawberry, the fleshy part is the receptacle. The actual fruit of the strawberry plant are the small seedlike specks on the surface of the berry. These are dried fruitlets and contain the seed. It is the fertilization of the ovules that stimulates the receptacle to expand and produce the fruit. After pollinization the petals are no longer needed so the plant no longer supports these and they begin to dry and drop off. The anthers dry up but they do not drop off. If you look closely under the sepals, you will see the little anthers all the way around the berry. The receptacle grows at this point and remains green until just before ripening when it turns white, then red as it ripens. Incomplete fertilization of the many pistils in the strawberry flower results in a misshapen berry, sometimes with very strange shapes. Anthracnose and spider mites are probably the two worst pests of strawberries, particularly in warmer weather, which tends to accentuate the development of anthracnose and spider mites.

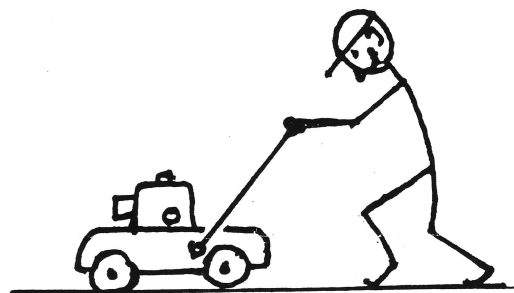
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APPLE TREES AND WARM WINTERS

Apple trees normally bear only after a dormant period during the winter with a chilling requirement based on the particular species of tree. It has been reported, however, that the dormancy requirement for our subtropical apple varieties can frequently be met by simply removing the leaves during the winter. Apparently this causes a false dormancy; the trees "think" they have been through a winter and they leaf out again in the spring. Frequently they will bloom and if the weather is relatively cool at that time, they will set fruit. This might be an interesting experiment this winter if we fail to get leaf drop for those who have apple trees.

* * * HELP NEEDED * * *

Here is an opportunity for members to contribute to their Club at another Work Day: Sunday, January 19, which is the Sunday following the regular January meeting. Work days are great social events as well as providing needed maintenance and upgrading of our facility. Here is a chance to meet the other members and work with them for a common cause. The weather should be cool and work should be very pleasant. We will start at 10:00 a.m. on January 19 and work thru until 4:00 p.m. in the afternoon so you may set your own start and stop time within these hours. Work two hours, three hours, four hours, six hours, whatever suits your fancy. But please try to spend a little time with your horticultural friends to the benefit of all. Also, the exercise will do you good.



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NEW USES FOR OLD CARPET

Our RFCI Chapter will be using old carpet still in relatively good condition for a variety of purposes. For some of our ideas, we can thank Bemis Gordon in Brooksville, who is a charter member of our group and a devoted grower of subtropical trees. We are presently using carpet, bottom side up, for a floor in our grocery cart storage building since this provides a much better floor than the dirt floor which we have had to use in the past. Strips of carpet, also bottom side up, will be used for our pathways in the planting area as we develop same.

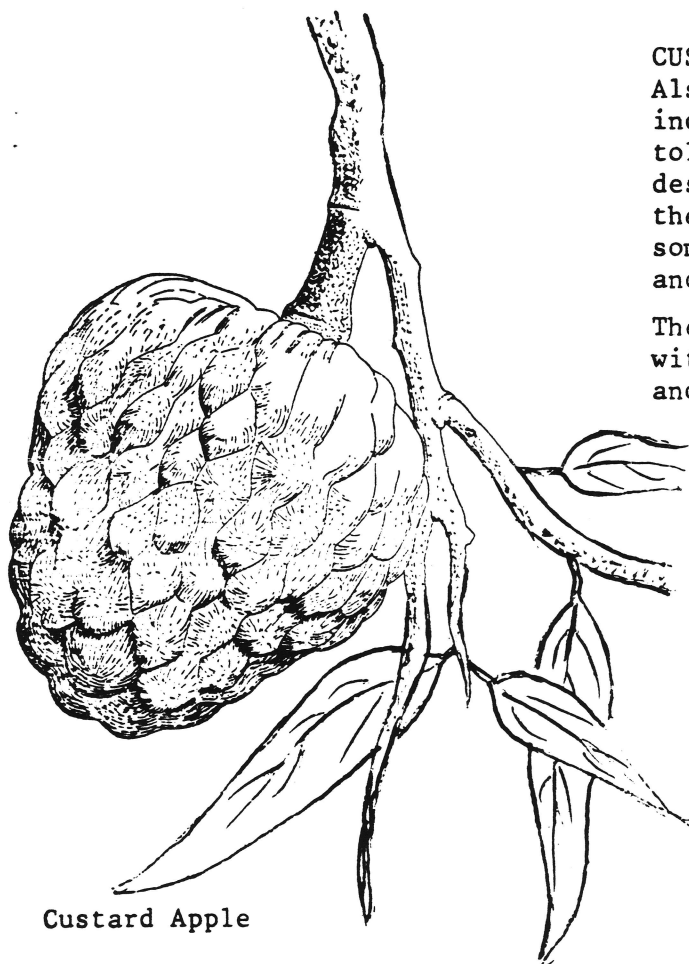
Round sections for single trees and rectangular pieces for rows of trees will be used as a protective mulch around the base of the trees. The carpet provides a porous surface to allow rain water to penetrate to the soil underneath. It prevents the growth of weeds around the tree and tends to stabilize the soil temperature at the surface during the sunlight hours, and provides some slight insulation on cold nights.

We are presently experimenting with the use of used carpet as a help in cold protection of tender trees. A length of carpet roughly the height of a small plant and equal in length to the circumference of the foliage is wrapped in a circle to form a large tube around the plant. Because of the stiffness of the carpet, it stands up around the plant, forming a large container which we have filled with wood shavings to form a complete protective envelope. On March 1, weather permitting, we will remove the carpet from around the plants and at that point, we will use the wood shavings to replenish the mulch around other trees. This is a spin-off idea from Walter Vines' cold protection method.

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Continued from last month...

POND APPLE (*Annona glabra*). The pond apple is indigenous to swamps and is a vigorous grower, making it a good candidate for root stock for other annonas, which is its primary use. It grows wild in south Florida, the West Indies, on the mainland of tropical America and in the Galapagos Islands. Tropical in nature, it will withstand a few degrees of frost. It is a relatively small tree, spreading in nature and with smooth oblong or elliptic leaves, glossy green above and paler beneath. The flowers are large with three cream colored outer petals and smaller inside petals, whitish outside and blood red within. This fruit has the characteristic annona shape, 2" to 4" long, smooth, green until it ripens with bright yellow color and soft yellowish flesh within. The pulp is not of an agreeable taste but may be used in ice creams and custards with the addition of sweetener.



Custard Apple

CUSTARD APPLE (*Annona reticulata*). Also called the Bullock's Heart, is indigenous to tropical America, but is tolerant of light frost. It is a dessert fruit but less appealing than the sugar apple and atemoya. However, some better varieties have been selected and it is a fruit well worth growing.

The fruit matures at 3" to 4" in diameter with an external color reddish to yellow and an internal color white to red and has the typical annona shape, characteristic and texture that the sugar apple and atemoya exhibit.

Mature trees will normally top out at about 20 feet if they have not been killed back by freezes. It is semi-deciduous, sometimes remaining devoid of foliage for several weeks through the winter time.

The leaves are lanceolate in form, 4" to 6" in length. The flowers resemble sugar apple and atemoya flowers.

It is presently grown in the Asiatic tropics and is cultivated in India, Ceylon, Polynesia, Australia and

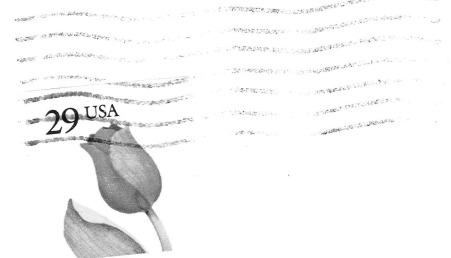
Africa. The tree prefers a deep rich soil with plenty of moisture. It may be propagated by budding or grafting on the soursop, pond apple and sugar apple, as well as seedlings of its own species. It is also used as a root stock for other annona species. We believe it would be a good candidate for crossing with the cherimoya or sugar apple.

To be continued...

PLANT RAFFLE : December 1991.

<u>PLANT NAME</u>	<u>DONOR</u>	<u>WINNER</u>
Mysore Raspberry	Mark Bennet	Gregg Cardin
Mysore Raspberry	Mark Bennet	Al Hendry
Mysore Raspberry	Mark Bennet	?
Naranjilla	Charles Novak	Gregg Cardin
Hot Pepper	Lloyd Shipley	Jim Murrie
Hot Pepper	Lloyd Shipley	Gregg Cardin
Hot Pepper	Lloyd Shipley	? (X2)
Grumichama	Bob Heath	Bob Baker
Bignay	Bob Heath	Paul Zmoda
Loquat	Bob Heath	Nancy McCormack
Rangoon Creeper	Bob Heath	Charles Novak
Red Mullberry	Zmoda	Nancy McCormack
Celeste Fig	Honeycutt	Bob McElyea
Celeste Fig	Honeycutt	Walter Vines
Passion Fruit	Honeycutt	Louis Zoehrer
Passion Fruit	Honeycutt	Monica Brandies
Loquat seedling	Honeycutt	Louis Zoehrer
Natal Plum	Honeycutt	Bob Heath
Spanish Lime seedling	Honeycutt	Gregg Cardin
Chayote	?	Zmoda

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