



# NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 1992

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 . . . . . FEBRUARY 9, 1992

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

PROGRAM . . . . . MARIAN VAN ATTA WILL SPEAK ON "GROWING AND USING  
EXOTIC FRUITS AND VEGETABLES", a subject on  
which she certainly is an authority. She is  
the author of the newsletter "Living off the  
Land". She also lectures extensively and writes  
a news column for her local newspaper.

## Tasting Table

Lillian Stark: Black Sapote-almond bread  
Pat Jean: Jumbles cookies  
Janet Conard & Al Roberts: Banana muffins & Papaya juice  
Virginia Means: Persimmon Cake  
Joan Murrie: Lemon Squares  
Charles Novak: Sugar Cane  
Frank & Alice Burhenn: Fudge Nut Brownies  
Bob Heath: Carambola

*Thank You Thank You Thank you*

The scheduled work day on January 19 was essentially rained out. Although we need the rain, that was a disappointment. Arnold and Lillian Stark spent the day cleaning up inside the building. Gerald Amyot showed up ready to work in the yard, but heavy rains prevented him from doing so. Later in the afternoon, the rain subsided somewhat and Jud Newcombe spent a steamy few hours trimming shrubs of their sharp lower branches. Bob Heath and Frank Honeycutt spent the following Sunday on both inside and outside chores. We need your help to maintain the property. If you can't get to the next scheduled work day, let us know when you can come and we'll try to schedule a time for you.

## FRUITING TREES OF SRI LANKA by Dr. Frank Martin

In Sri Lanka there is constant concern among the inhabitants for survival, which makes the people look at fruit in a way different from the way we look at fruit; to use what they know works and to make what you know work because if they don't, their income may be rapidly lost and in Sri Lanka, there is no unemployment or social security or welfare benefits. Sri Lanka is a developing country with problems to solve and the plants they grow must be guaranteed to produce an income. Dr. Martin went to Sri Lanka for a month to work on an important assignment with fruits and vegetables and was able to see what needs to be done.

Sri Lanka is an island off the southeastern coast of the sub-continent of India. Compared to India it is a relatively small island, pear shaped, with a base to the south. It is 270 miles long north to south and about 140 miles wide at its widest point. Near the center of the island are some very well weathered mountains which reach only to about 8,000 feet but they provide a major influence on the weather of Sri Lanka. Prevailing winds alternate more or less on a 6 month basis. Winter winds come in from the northeast and provide almost desert conditions on the northeast side of the mountains. Monsoon or summer winds come in from the southwest but here the rising clouds drop their rainfall on the southwest side of the mountain and the rain never gets to the northeast side so it remains desert-like. The southeast side of the island remains very wet; the northeast side remains a desert and the majority of the rivers flow southwest from the mountains. Only one major river flows through the desert. These factors provide the island with two distinct ecological zones and greatly influence the agriculture of the island and everything that grows there.

There are 17.5 million inhabitants on Sri Lanka; the majority of inhabitants' ancestors came from central India some 2000 years before and are called Singhalese. They have a distinct language without roots in any other known tongue and a script and alphabet that is entirely theirs. At a later date the Tamils or Malabars from the southern tip of India came in to the island. They have a completely different racial background and have occupied the southern tip of the island. The Muslims also came into Sri Lanka on the northern coast and have established themselves with their religion in that area. The Tamils are Hindus and for hundreds of years these people have lived peacefully side by side with the Singhalese. It is only recently that antagonism between them has been stirred up and their war has begun, so that today the northern 25% of the country is closed to tourists and visitors because of the troubles there.

How do you feed a population of over 17 million people? Well, there are a number of prime crops. The number one crop in Sri Lanka is rice. The short straw rice which was developed during the Green Revolution has been further developed for use in Sri Lanka by the horticulturists there. So wherever you go in the wet parts of Sri Lanka, every river and stream has been channeled into flats for the production of rice and almost everyone in Sri Lanka is somehow related to the production of rice. Sri Lanka considers itself a Socialist state but it's really more like a people's dictatorship. And this has influenced the agriculture in the region. When Sri Lanka was conquered and colonized by the British, a plantation system was established with very large farms owned by a few rich individuals and the majority of people worked on these large plantations almost in a slave-like situation.

With the coming of the Socialistic state an attempt was made to break these large plantations down into small farms. This process was very effective and today the scientific system of agriculture in general has been destroyed, although some plantations still exist. Most of those are tea plantations higher up in the mountains and cool, even though they're only about 8 degrees from the equator. So tea is the number 2 crop in Sri Lanka, and if the plants are properly tended, being perennial, will last for years.

Rubber is perhaps the third most important crop and Sri Lanka is one of the Asian countries that produces rubber in that area. Coconuts are the fourth major crop and they are grown both on a very small scale and on a very large scale. On small farms they are used in the home and on large plantations for the production of copra, which is the dried coconut meat. The coconut meat, the copra, is used for the extraction of coconut oil, which is still an important product in the world.

One large river runs northward in the desert areas and that area is being developed using the river water for irrigation but the government has divided this entire area into 2-1/2 acre farms, which, like all the rest of the small farms, produces a very meager living for the farmers. The people are barely able to produce enough to feed their families but can never aspire to anything better. These small farms are an important reality of the Sri Lankan agricultural and political system. Now, what grows on these small farms? Well, mostly fruit and vegetables. Ceylon, as Sri Lanka was once known, is one of the Spice Islands and while spices are not a primary crop at this time, it is still important to the tourists and people who live there. They grow black pepper and vanilla which is called a bean but is actually the seed of the vanilla orchid. Cardamom is grown rather extensively because there is a large market in the Arab countries where it is used to flavor coffee. Nutmeg, which is native to Southeast Asia, grows very well there and is used for the spice nutmeg and mace, which is prepared from the red aril which surrounds the seed. Also allspice, as well as several others are grown. The number one important fruit crop of the small farms is the coconut which is used in the household almost every day. The coconut may be eaten fresh as we eat it or it may be allowed to sprout, at which time the roots form inside the coconut to provide a ball of nutritious flesh which has more nutrition than the coconut meat itself.

Perhaps the next most important fruit is the jackfruit which is important not so much for the ripe fruit, which is a dessert fruit, but for the immature fruit which is used as a vegetable. As a vegetable it probably more closely resembles a summer squash, although the flesh tends to be more solid. It is usually cut into pieces, boiled and flavored with some kind of sauce. It is frequently called the poor man's fruit because no matter how poor a person is, they can almost always afford the nutritious jackfruit.

The third fruit of importance is probably the banana, which is grown like the jackfruit all over the country. It is so important that you will find it in every little store throughout Sri Lanka, a stalk or two hanging in the smallest stores. The banana, of course, is eaten as a dessert fruit in most cases but is occasionally fried as a vegetable. Two of the 20 to 30 clones of banana which are grown in Sri Lanka are of major importance. One of these is the ladyfinger banana which is called Embol in Sri Lanka. The other important banana is the one that we call the apple banana. The apple banana, however, has a very serious drawback in that as the fruit ripens, the skin tends to split or pull away, exposing the interior to bacteria. The government of Sri Lanka is very interested in producing or developing the ladyfinger banana to be an export product to the Arab world where it is esteemed. However, with millions of small farms, this is an almost impossible process. So a procedure is under way to develop larger farms to produce this particular banana and handle it properly so it may be shipped to the Arab world. And this is a major problem, how to organize this diverse agricultural system which the government itself has devised to produce a national export product.

Dr. Martin's recommendation to the government was to introduce the Cavendish banana which is the banana of commerce today.

The next fruit of great importance is the mango. As you know the mango is native to Southeast Asia and most of the mango varieties grown in Sri Lanka have come from India by way of seed instead of grafting, which makes for thousands of different varieties, only a few of which are of good quality. These few are being further developed in the experiment stations in Sri Lanka. Also the better varieties that have been developed in Florida have been taken to the agricultural centers for testing. As those who have raised mangoes know, for 7 or 8 months of the year, you have nothing and for the rest of the time, you have more mangoes than you can possibly use. In Sri Lanka the mango is used more often as a fresh fruit but an effort is being made to develop uses for the surplus to be canned and exported. Dr. Martin's recommendation to the government was to produce by grafting as many of the better varieties as possible and get them out to the people for testing to see which ones are most satisfactory.

The avocado was fruiting when Dr. Martin was in Sri Lanka and in order to assess the quality of the avocados being produced, they sent a boy out to buy as many different varieties of avocado as he possibly could. Over a 2 day period, he came back with about 75 different varieties and then Dr. Martin began to assess the quality. He found some beautiful looking avocados which were almost inedible, watery, poor tasting, stringy. Likewise poor looking fruit that had excellent qualities of flavor and texture, and he actually found a few that were exceptional in all qualities.

In Sri Lanka avocados are almost never eaten by themselves as we do here; they are almost always mixed with other fruit, sauces or in salads, or added to their curries.

The papaya is another important fruit and like the avocado, has been introduced in a haphazard fashion through the importation of seeds. As a result, the quality of the papayas produced ranges through the entire spectrum.

The pineapple is grown extensively in certain part of Sri Lanka but the quality of the fruit is not very good and is certainly not suitable for export. His recommendation on the pineapple was to introduce the smooth cayenne, which is an excellent large fruited pineapple.

Another major crop is the passion fruit. Both the yellow and the purple passion fruit are grown extensively. The yellow passion fruit is grown on the larger plantations while the purple passion fruit seems to be a home crop. Commercially the passion fruit is used for juice.

Another fruit of lesser importance in Sri Lanka is the mangosteen, which is grown throughout the country and can be found in all the little grocery stores. However, the fruit are smaller than the usual mangosteen although the quality is just as good.

Another of the minor crops is the rambutan. It is grown extensively on the small farms but the trees are almost invariably seedlings and the quality varies accordingly. Like the mangosteen, it is not grown on an extensive enough basis to allow it to be used as an export crop.

The durian is also grown extensively but the main drawback to development of the durian is the tremendous size of the tree and the buttress roots that develop from it. Because of the large trunk and spread of the tree, it is impossible to consider it as an orchard tree on a large scale.

The carambola is also grown extensively but it is not a fruit which could be considered a moneymaker in this part of the world, and is grown almost exclusively for home consumption.

The wood apple, the tamarind, and the American fruits, soursop and guava, are also grown and are used as dooryard fruit as well as in the neighborhood markets.

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#### RECIPE OF THE MONTH: PAPAYA NUT BREAD by Bob Heath

2 cups papaya well mashed	1 teaspoon salt
2 eggs, beaten	1 teaspoon baking soda
2 cups all purpose flour	1/2 cup chopped walnuts
1 cup sugar	

Mix papaya and eggs in a large bowl. Stir in flour, sugar, salt & baking soda. Add walnuts and blend. Put batter in greased loaf or bundt pan and bake for approximately one hour @ 350°F. Remove from pan to rack and serve still warm or cooled.

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## A N N O U N C E M E N T S

### WORK DAY AT THE CLUBHOUSE

We're going to try again to have a work day since our last one was completely rained out and only Jud Newcombe, Gerald Amyot, Arnold and Lillian Stark showed up to work in spite of the rain.

Next work day will be Sunday, February 16, which is the Sunday following the regular February meeting. The weather should still be cool and work should be very pleasant. We will start at 10:00 a.m. on February 16 and work through until 4:00 p.m. in the afternoon so you may set your own start and stop time within these hours according to whatever suits your fancy. We can assure that the work will be gratifying and the exercise will do you good. Please see the January issue of the newsletter under "Help Needed" for additional propaganda concerning the joys of working at the club house!!

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### U.S.F. SPRING PLANT SALE

Our plant sale at the University of South Florida will take place on Saturday, April 16, and will be discussed in detail at the March and April meetings. Members, at this time, should be potting up fruiting plants for sale and planning to attend the sale in April, as we will need all the help we can get.

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### ANNUAL TREE SALE AT THE ARMORY

We have reserved the Armory for our annual Tree Sale for two weekends, October 10 and 11 and October 17 and 18, to permit consideration for the most opportune time. At this stage it appears that the most desirable weekend will be the October 10 and 11. This year we are intending to have a two-day sale from 2:00 to 5:00 on Saturday and from 1:00 to 4:00 on Sunday. We can expect a much better income from a two-day sale without too much additional work. We are considering this a trial run to determine our future approach.

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### PINE ISLAND NURSERY TRIP

We are planning our trip to Pine Island for February 29 which is a Saturday. The nursery on Pine Island is extensive and has a tremendous variety of rare tropical fruit trees for sale at reasonable prices.

We intend to meet at the club house between 8:00 and 8:30 on the morning of February 29 and leave no later than 8:30. It is a three hour drive to the nursery on Pine Island, which will put us there about 11:30 to permit a short tour of the nursery and to meet Bob Murray before lunch at 12:00, as the nursery closes from 12 to 1:00. From 1:00 to 3:00 at the nursery, we will purchase plants and return home by dark at 6:00 in the evening.

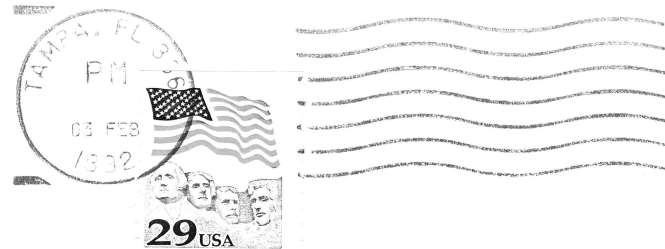
Those who have station wagons or vans will need to act as chauffeurs so that the trip will be more pleasant and not so many vehicles will be required. A sign-up sheet will be available at the next meeting for those who are interested, or you may call Bob Heath at 879-6349 during office hours or 289-1068 in the evening if you cannot make our next meeting.

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Plant Raffle: January 1992

<u>Plant Name</u>	<u>Donor</u>	<u>Winner</u>
Celeste fig	Honeycutt	Mabel Galbreath
Chaya	Honeycutt	W. Arkwright
Chaya	Honeycutt	?
Sweet Pepper (2)	Honeycutt	Al Hendry
Seedling Loquat	Honeycutt	Monica Brandies
Seedling Loquat	Honeycutt	?
Jaboticaba	Hill	Joel Bennett
Jaboticaba	Hill	?
Chaya (2)	Hill	?
Carambola fruit	Heath	R. O. Wente
Carambola fruit	Heath	Gregg Cardin
Downy Myrtle	Heath	Al Hendry
White sapote	Heath	Al Jean
Glycosmos	Heath	Gregg Cardin
Guava	Frank Tintera	Jim Murrie
Batwing Passion Vine	Paul Zmoda	Nancy McCormack
Red Passion flower	Paul Zmoda	Burhenn
Tamarind	Burhenn	Samm Philmore
Rollinia	Burhenn	Zmoda
White Sapote	Stark	Robert Wente
Ponderosa Lemon	Stark	Robert Wente
Ponderosa Lemon	Stark	Jim Murrie
Naranjilla	Charles Novak	Monica Brandies

TAMPA BAY CHAPTER RFCI  
 313 PRUETT RD  
 SEFFNER FL 33584



FIRST CLASS MAIL

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