



# NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 1995

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

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE: BOB HEATH  
THERESA HEATH  
ARNOLD STARK  
LILLIAN STARK

PRESIDENT: PAUL ZMODA

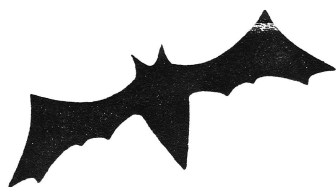
CHAPTER MAIL ADDRESS: 313 PRUETT RD, SEFFNER FL 33584  
(INCLUDING RENEWALS)

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

NEXT MEETING . . . . . NOVEMBER 12, 1995

MEETING PLACE. . . . . RARE FRUIT COUNCIL 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  
clubhouse on left immediately past McDonald School.

PROGRAM. . . . . ALL ABOUT BATS. The bat lady, Cindy Marks, from  
the Bat Center in Bay Pines, will be speaking to  
us about her favorite animal, the much maligned  
bat. Bats, probably more than any other wild  
animal, are a benefit to man, and Cindy will  
explain to us why this is so. She has a slide  
presentation and also will bring us some bats  
to meet. She will also reveal how bats benefit  
our society and our fruiting plants. This  
should be an interesting presentation, and one  
a little different from our usual fare. In  
addition, we will have our tasting table and  
plant raffle, so please contribute.



## New Members:

Fred & Barbara Born 5715 W. Paul Bryant Drive, Crystal River, FL 34429 (904)795-0489  
Dot & Hugh Buerke P.O. Box 185, Terra Ceia, FL (941)722-1993  
Patricia Cherundolo 4230 Simms Road, Lakeland, FL 33809 (941)859-4101  
Randolph & Aime Clarke P.O. Box 90365, Lakeland, FL 33804-0365 (941)853-4553  
Dindial & Raffina Hue P.O. Box 2147, Land O' Lakes, FL 34639 (813)996-2082  
Richard LaRiviere P.O. Box 1156, Land O' Lakes, FL 34639-1156 (813)996-6008  
Negron, Arnaldo 5811 Little River Dr., Tampa, FL 33615 (813)882-9829 (TDD only)  
Ron Opat 11564 Ridgewood Circle, Seminole, FL 34642 (813)393-7411  
Leslie, Pohley 1845 Rainbow Dr., Clearwater, FL 34625 (813)442-8764  
Bruce Shepard 4201 Carrollwood Village Drive, Tampa, FL 33624 (813)961-3630  
Polly Shewfelt 120 Phillips Drive, Seffner, FL 33584 (813)689-8621  
Cathy Sellers 1408 Dashwood Court, Brandon, FL 33510 (813)685-4205  
Frank & Ida Walker 11717 Plumosa Road, Tampa, FL 33618 (813)932-8795

## Attention Board Members:

There will be an important board of directors meeting directly after the November Club meeting.  
Please plan to attend.

## MY CASSABANANA by Bob Heath

According to Julia Morton, "The CASSABANANA is a handsome and interesting member of the Cucurbitaceae. It is also called Sikana, or Musk Cucumber. The vine is a perennial, herbaceous, fast growing, climbing by means of tendrils into the tops of trees. Renowned for its strong, sweet, agreeable melon-like fragrance, the striking fruit is cylindrical, sometimes slightly curved, 12 to 24 inches in length, 4" thick, hard shelled, red, smooth and glossy when ripe, with firm orange-yellow cantaloupe-like juicy flesh. The central core is a soft pulp with numerous flat oval seeds in tightly packed rows extending the entire length of the fruit."

The vine is very rare in this area and when I obtained some seeds a year or so ago, I was excited when I obtained one vigorously growing vine which grew rapidly up into the top of my palm trees and podocarpus. We waited impatiently for the vine to fruit, but while we looked frequently up into the treetops, we were unable to see the developing fruit. Unbeknownst to us, the vine was putting on fruit and we later discovered there were approximately 12 large fruit developing up there. Then... tragedy.

Something, a raccoon or possum, ate through the vine near the ground, and the vine began to wither. It was at this point we discovered the fruit hanging in the trees and noted that one large one was a bright red color. All the rest were still green, but apparently this one had ripened before the vine was severed. By means of a ladder and a long pole with a hook at the end, we were able to bring down several of the green fruit, but we were unable to reach that beautiful red one. Then the day before the tree sale, it fell, landing in our bromeliad bed and being undamaged. We were excited. We showed it to our children and neighbors and promised them seeds when we opened the ripe fruit. Also, we took it to the tree sale where it became a center of attraction on the display table. It elicited comments from everyone and added to our excitement. I promised my wife, Theresa, that I would bring it home after the tree sale and we would cut it and sample the cantaloupe-flavored flesh.

But this was not to be. At 5:00 p.m. when I went to retrieve my cassabanana, it had been stolen. Somebody took it off the table and left us very upset and disappointed. No fruit to sample, no mature seeds to plant, no cassabanana for my family. Now I ask you, is that fair?

## PLANT INFORMATION

by Charles Novak

Roy Grear and I took another trip to the University of Florida in Gainesville to visit Mr. Sharp (Sharpblue blueberries). This time we were able to sample Feijoa (Pineapple guava) and get some Feijoa plants that the University was not going to use for further research. Feijoa fruit have a good flavor and I especially like the flower petals. The flower petals have a cinnamon flavor. I planted five plants four years ago, and they are about 5 feet tall now. They produced flowers twice and produced fruit only once; not very productive. Possibly, someone in our club could do research on Feijoa by planting as many seedlings as are available to attempt to find a Feijoa that will produce fruit in our area every year. If someone has the room to plant a lot of seedlings, I will supply the seedlings.

## THE CARAMBOLA

by Gene Joyner

(reprinted from Tropical Fruit News, Vol. 29, No. 5, May 1995)

The carambola, Averrhoa carambola, is a small evergreen tree native to Malaya and Southeast Asia. This is one of the most rewarding of tropical fruits for either the beginner or the experienced tropical fruit grower, since it thrives on a wide variety of soil types and produces two major crops a year.

Trees grow to heights of only 25 to 30 feet at maturity, but can easily be kept 8 to 10 feet tall and still produce more fruit than a family can use. They are also excellent for use in containers and many people grow carambolas as a container plant on porches or patios. The tiny attractive light-to-dark pink flowers are produced twice a year, usually late spring and early fall, and these are followed shortly by the unusual three-to-seven inch artificial-looking waxy fruit.

Fruit color can be orange, yellow or almost white, and the fruit has five prominent ribs running the length of the fruit, and when it's cut in cross sections, you get attractive star-shaped pieces. For this reason, it's often called star fruit. The fruits vary widely in quality, some seedlings have very sour inferior fruit, while many named grafted varieties are sweet and delicious.

Trees should be planted in well-drained locations, and although they are tolerant of flooding for brief periods, do not prefer soil which is continually moist. They like acid conditions for best fruiting, and when planted in a highly alkaline soil, often develop micro-nutrient deficiencies which require treatment with nutritional sprays.

Carambolas are well suited for light shade or full sun, but have poor salt tolerance and should be kept well away from direct salt wind. The star fruit is generally propagated by grafting onto carambola seedlings. Seedlings will bear fruit, but usually take three to five years, and the fruit quality may be inferior to the parent.

There are very few serious pest problems associated with carambolas. Some stink bug damage may affect maturing fruit and in some cases birds or other animals might also attack fruit, but never become a serious problem.

There is commercial acreage of carambola planted in south Florida in Homestead and in Palm Beach County. Increased interest in this fruit for commercial plantings is justified by the wide acceptance it has in local markets. There are many varieties of carambolas that are grown commercially, but the "Arkin" is still the most widely planted. Varieties for home use include "Maha", "Fwang Tung", "Newcomb", "Maher Dwarf" and a number of others. The best thing to do before purchasing carambolas is to taste several varieties to see which one you like best, then find that particular variety at local nurseries and purchase it.

If you do your own propagation of fruits, carambolas can be either budded or veneer grafted, usually during the spring or summer months when they are in more active growth. Also, carambolas can be rooted from cuttings under certain conditions with root hormone products.

Once you have a carambola tree in your landscape, after a few years of production it becomes quite obvious that you are not going to eat that many fresh carambolas, and the next question is, what else can they be used for? Fortunately, carambolas are used in a variety of ways either fresh or processed. They make excellent garnishes for fruit salads; they can be juiced; they can be made into jellies, jams, pies and now even carambola wine is becoming available. Carambolas also make delicious ice creams and can be combined with other fruits for delicious combinations. Carambola fruit leather is also excellent as a treat for everyone in the family.

Most home economics departments of local Cooperative Extension Service offices can provide recipes for using this versatile fruit, and many cookbooks and recipe books on tropical fruit cooking list uses of carambola that you might not have thought of.

(Of course, the RFCI's own "Tropical Fruit Recipes" is the supreme source of inspiration! Ed.)

## THE PINEAPPLE

by Gene Joyner

(reprinted from Tropical Fruit News, Vol. 29, No. 7, July 1995)

The pineapple, *Ananas comosus*, is a popular world-wide fruit familiar to almost everyone, and can be grown easily either as a container plant or in the landscape. Pineapples are a member of the bromeliad family and are native to tropical America.

Pineapples come in a number of different varieties, but most have long thin strap-like leaves bearing spiny tips, and usually small spines along the leaf margin. Although some varieties of pineapples have no spines, most of the ones found in nature do.

Pineapples reach a height of about 3 to 4 feet at maturity, with a width of almost 6 feet, and take from 16 to 30 months to reach maturity and produce their delicious fruit. Most fruits flower in our area during the late winter and spring with the fruit ripening during the summer months.

Plants should be protected from cold weather since they can be injured by temperatures below 32 degrees F., and will be killed at about 27 degrees F.

When growing outdoors, grow in full sun or light shade for best results, and make sure the soil is slightly acid, since they do not do well in high alkaline soils. When putting pineapples out in the garden, space the plants 12 to 18 inches apart, and make sure you leave sufficient aisles for walking between rows if multiple rows are planted.

Many people like to plant pineapples on a slight bed to be sure they receive well-drained conditions. Plants do poorly in soils subject to regular flooding.

Propagation of pineapples can be from the crown, which is on the top of the fruit; suckers, which are below the fruit; or ratoons, which originate from below ground at the base of the plant. Generally, most people start pineapples from the crown of the fruit, but this is considered one of the poorest planting pieces, while ratoons are considered the best propagation material.

Pineapples are subject to nematodes on sandy soils and improving the soil with organic matter will help to slow down this problem. Mealybugs are a major insect problem in some areas, and often attack the root of the plant in addition to the top portions.

Plants in the soil must be in areas that have warm temperatures for proper growth, and often during the winter months plants stop growing when temperatures reach 55 degrees F or lower.

Fruits come in many varieties, but all at maturity are yellow or golden yellow. Don't pick fruit until full maturity for best quality. The following varieties are grown in Florida and have proven to be very well adapted: Smooth Cayenne, Red Spanish, Abakka, Natal Queen, Pernambuco and several others.

Weeds may be a major problem in pineapple patches because of the spiny leaves, and at the beginning when plants are first installed, a 3 to 4 inch layer of good mulching material should be put around the plants. This should eliminate weeding for at least one year. Fertilize with a general-purpose-type fertilizer every four to six weeks to promote rapid growth and fruiting.



## What's Happening

### October-November, 1995

by Paul Zmoda

Now that our tree sales are over, it is time to regroup and tend to those special projects which need extra care. Sprouting rare seeds is sometimes quite a challenge due to different factors. Some seeds, such as durian and akee must be sprouted ASAP after removing from the fruit-their lives are very limited. There are other seeds which sport extremely hard coats which should be chipped or filed to speed up germination. Jujubes and olives require this treatment.

Cold stratification is a technique used to break dormancy in seeds of pawpaws, plums, persimmons, almonds, etc. To accomplish this, wrap the fresh seed in moist toweling and place into a plastic bag. Put this in your refrigerator for up to 6 months before attempting to plant.

Soaking seeds in various liquids may help germination. I find 3% hydrogen peroxide, water (with a spot of dishwashing detergent to increase wetness) or gibberellic acid solutions work very well.

A friend reported that he had some rare fruit seeds in his pants pocket and forgot to retrieve before laundering. He wrote them off as "ruined". I thought - wait a minute, how can you be sure they were ruined unless you planted them? So I experimented... I placed some hard-to-germinate seeds in a nylon mesh bag and threw them into a washing machine set on it's hottest setting. Later, after planting, the seeds came up in two weeks. So much for "ruined"!

## *Thank You Thank You Thank You*

To all the members who put in so many hours in October during (and before and after too!) our Annual sale. We would like to acknowledge the efforts of the following members who signed the sale worker attendance roster. (If you were there, but your name is not listed below, please let the editors know, so we can recognize your efforts next month.)

GERALD AMYOT  
WARREN ARKWRIGHT  
BOB BAKER  
SHERRY BAKER  
ALVIN BOJAR  
MONICA BRANDIES  
PHILLIP BROWN  
FRANK BURHENN  
ALICE BURHENN  
JANET CONARD  
LEO COTTER  
BRENT CREIGHTON  
SCOTT DANIELS  
EDITH FREEDMAN  
ROY GREAR  
TONY GRICIUS  
BOB HEATH  
TERRY HEATH

AL HENDRY  
RICHARD HUNT  
KIMBERLY HUNT  
AL JEAN  
PAT JEAN  
CHRIS KNIGHT  
ED KRAUJALIS  
LEWIS MAXWELL  
DIANA MILLS  
PETER MONTANO  
JIM MURRIE  
JOAN MURRIE  
EDWARD MUSGRAVE  
PEARL NELSON  
JUD NEWCOMBE  
VAN NGUYEN  
CHARLES NOVAK

LINDA NOVAK  
GERTRUDE PIERRE  
BETH REDDICLIFFE  
GEORGE RIEGLER  
AL ROBERTS  
IRENE RUBENSTEIN  
WILLIAM RYLAND  
ELAINE SARRASIN  
KASS SCOTT-RIVERA  
LILLIAN SMOLENY  
ARNOLD STARK  
LILLIAN STARK  
FRED STRICKLAND  
FRANK TINTERA  
ROMAGENE VACCARO  
WALTER VINES  
PAUL ZMODA

The following members also participated in the USF Botanical Garden Sale for our club's benefit:

JERRY AMYOT  
SHERRY BAKER  
ALICE BURHENN  
PHIL BROWN  
EDITH FREEDMAN  
BOB HEATH  
BUSTER KEATON

BILL RYLAND  
ARNOLD STARK  
LILLIAN STARK

## Of Interest to Members:

The Caloosa Rare Fruit Exchange will have it's Annual Sale on Saturday, November 11 from 9AM to 3PM at Terry Park, 3406 Palm Beach Blvd, Fort Myers. (813)283-2953.

### POT LUCK LUNCH AND ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION:

On Sunday, December 3, 1995, at 1:00 p.m., the U.S.F. Botanical Gardens will hold a covered dish lunch and a round table discussion on plant festivals to get our ideas, comments, suggestions and constructive criticism concerning our semi-annual U.S.F. Plant Festival Sale. All club members are invited and anyone interested in attending this affair please advise by contacting Bob Heath at 289-1068. We need at least two members to represent the RFCI at this affair. Please advise by November 12 so we may make reservations.

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