



NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 1996

**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

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

NEXT MEETING: FEBRUARY 11, 1996

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.

NOTE: BECAUSE OF THE STATE FAIR AND CONSTRUCTION ON I-4, EXPECT TRAVEL DELAYS AND PLAN EXTRA TIME TO GET TO THE MEETING.

PROGRAM: RARE FRUIT POTPOURRI. Our talk this month will have five speakers from our own experts.

AL HENDRY will speak on his trip to the Inter-American Society of Tropical Horticulture meeting in Columbia, South America, and the tropical fruit parks he visited there.

CHARLES NOVAK will discuss the pawpaw, his efforts to find varieties which will fruit in central Florida, and the future of the PAWPAW as a commercial crop.

ROY GREAR will speak on his efforts to find and propagate more cold hardy and rare fruiting trees suitable for this area.

GEORGE RIEGLER will speak about his trip to Peru with Dr. Paul Beaver, an exploratory trip to the highlands of Peru.

BOB HEATH will speak on the rampant growth of the cassabanana and its prolific production of fruit.

PLEASE CONTRIBUTE TO THE RAFFLE AND TASTING TABLE!

The Sale is coming soon.

Remember to schedule time for this exciting weekend:

March 30 and 31

Everyone's help is needed.

You are important in making this a successful event.

Publicize the sale to one and all.

Post the flyers.

Propagate plants for sale.

Plan on working at the Sale.

Prepare fruit bread, cakes and preserves for the Sale.

Fred Born is a recently joined member of our club and an avid grower of many kinds of fig trees, but as he says, "I'm no expert." However, for a non-expert, he seems to have an awful lot of expertise concerning figs. This is probably because he has grown figs for a considerable length of time.

Fred is originally from Wildwood, Illinois, a little town about 30 or 40 miles from Chicago. He grew up on an average suburban lot where they grew lots of fruit trees and vegetables, but it was in the Navy that he developed his taste for stewed figs, which he ate almost every morning for breakfast. When he got out of the Navy, he wanted to grow fig trees, which was very difficult that far north.

But they moved to Florida in 1984 and settled in Crystal River where they bought a house on a big lot. He thought he knew how to garden, but gardening in Florida is different than gardening in Illinois, and growing figs takes a certain technique that must be followed. He's not sure how many fig trees he has, but he does have 15 to 20 different varieties. He indicates that figs are very easy to grow if you take care of one or two little idiosyncrasies. One of these is the birds and squirrels, and the other idiosyncrasy is nematodes. Other than that, figs are very easy to grow in Florida; anywhere in Florida is fine.

Figs apparently originated in Asia Minor or along the Mediterranean where the climate, with wet winters and dry spring and summer, is opposite of ours. Figs prefer the dry weather when they are developing fruit because a wet climate tends to split the skin and spoil the fruit. Also, the leaves develop a rust. There's not much one can do about the spoiling of the fruit and the rust is difficult to treat, requiring a frequent spraying with copper. The climate of California is more suited to the fig than our wet climate here in Florida.

Figs prefer a pH a little higher than most of our fruiting trees somewhere in the neighborhood of 7 to 8, but they will do well with even as low a pH as 5.

A very limiting factor which our Florida sand is subjected to is the nematode, which is a very tiny worm that invades the roots of figs and many other plants such as tomatoes and eggplant. The nematode causes a nodule in the root. Beyond this point, the root is useless and does not provide nourishment to the plant. With sufficient nematodes in the ground, the fig will stop fruiting, stop growing, wither and eventually die. Unfortunately, there is no treatment for a nematode infected plant once it has been planted in the ground and becomes infected. The government has outlawed vapam, which was our treatment until recently for treating the ground before planting.

Today the recommended treatment for nematodes is the "solar treatment". Previous to planting figs, tomatoes, eggplant or other plants subject to nematodes, one should clear the planting area, wet the soil and cover with black plastic weighted down with bricks. After two or three weeks in direct sunlight, the soil will be cooked enough to kill the nematodes.

Other than the nematodes, Florida soil is excellent for figs if properly fertilized. Fred recommends a fertilizer low in nitrogen such as 6-12-12 or something of this nature.

To thwart the nematodes and provide the ideal growing conditions for figs, Fred uses 55-gallon plastic drums cut in half and with several holes drilled in the bottom for good drainage. The barrels only cost four or five dollars and may be cut in half with a saber saw. This pot will last a lifetime. First, Fred places about 10 to 12 sheets of newspaper in the bottom of the barrel; then he fills the barrel 3/4 full with shredded cypress mulch from Home Depot or Scotty's. He uses cypress mulch because "it's kind of fuzzy" and works much better than pine bark or other things he's tried. On top of the cypress mulch he adds two or three inches of Pro-mix, which is a mixture of milled moss, Vermiculite and Pearlite. He adds a handful of 6-6-6 fertilizer and a handful of lime to sweeten the potting soil. For planting in the ground, Fred

recommends grafting on to a nematode resistant root stock, which is the recommended practice for good fig growing in Florida.

Fred propagates his figs by rooting cuttings. He takes cuttings about 6" long, bundles them up, the tops all pointing in the same direction, places them in a plastic bag and puts them in the refrigerator vegetable crisper for about a month. This makes the cuttings think it's winter time and they go to sleep and create a callus at the cut end. Before he bundles them, he washes them in a very weak solution of bleach in a five gallon bucket for 5 or 10 minutes, then shakes them off real well and puts them in the plastic. After their sleep, he sets them upright in a pot with most of the stems buried in Pro-mix, and puts them in a bright, shady place, hopefully at about 70 degrees. Once roots have formed, he removes them from the Pro-mix and pots them up individually in one gallon pots. He places them in bright shade for a month or so and then begins to harden them off in sunlight.

He indicates that all this may be an expensive way to acquire fruit. He speculated that the jar of stewed figs that he passed around probably cost five or six bucks. Every time he eats one, he figures it costs him about a dollar. That's counting fertilizer, Pro-mix, cypress mulch, etc.

Fred did agree with one comment from the audience that planting a fig tree next to a building or driveway permits the roots to get underneath the concrete where there are no nematodes, which might provide an answer to the nematode problem. He also discussed the roots of the figs which tend to form extensive mats just beneath the surface rather than sending down a tap root. And, of course, it's generally the upper layers of soils that the nematodes occupy.

Fred indicated that there are hundreds of named varieties of figs but he says, "If it tastes good, who cares what the name of it is."

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Recipes of the Month

Guava Pastries (based on Hungarian Kiflik)-Linda Novak

2 pounds flour (7½ cups)
6 egg yolks
2 whole eggs
1 pound butter
1 pint sour cream

1 TBS sugar
1 tsp salt
1 pkg yeast
¼ cup warm water

(This recipe makes a LOT of dough-you may want to prepare only half the recipe).

Dissolve yeast in warm water and set aside. Put the softened butter in a large bowl. Add beaten whole eggs and egg yolks. Mix in sour cream, salt, sugar, and yeast. Blend in flour. Leave dough in a warm place until it starts to rise. Store dough in the refrigerator several hours, or overnight. Remove dough from refrigerator and separate into 8 small balls. Roll out on a surface that has been dusted with flour and a small amount of granulated sugar. Roll out fairly thin as dough will rise while baking. Cut into squares (about 2½ inches). Fill with a small amount of guava paste, nut mixture, etc. And roll up. (Note that thick guava paste, not jam, should be used) Roll up corners and press together. Place on an ungreased cookie sheet and bake at 350°F until light brown, about 20 minutes. (For nut rolls, make a long roll, cut into 2 inch lengths, then bake, rather than rolling each one separately.

Nut filling for kiflik:

Beat 3 egg whites. When stiff, add ½ cup sugar and beat again. Fold in 1 pound ground nuts (pecans, walnuts) and 1 TBS. vanilla.

Raffle: January 1996

Plant Name	Donor	Winner
Curry Leaf	Stark	Kimberly Hunt
Blackberry jam Fruit	Stark	Robert Cash
Pummelo	Charles Novak	Robert Cash
Pummelo	Charles Novak	Lillian Smoleny
Pummelo	Charles Novak	Phil Brown
Pummelo	Charles Novak	Kimberly Hunt
Pummelo	Charles Novak	Lillian Stark
Pummelo	Charles Novak	John Bell
Bag of citrus fruit	Charles Nova	Kass Scott-Rivera
Tamarind	Heath	Elaine Sarrasin
Pineapple	Heath	Robert Cash
Pineapple	Heath	John Gibson
Pineapple	Heath	David Mitchell
White Sapote	Fereira	V. Reddicliffe
Canistel	Ferreira	Kimberly Hunt
Yellow Cattelya Guava	Zmoda	David Mitchell
Loquat	E. Musgrave	Kass Scott-Rivera
Loquat	E. Musgrave	David Mitchell
Bromeliad	V. Reddicliffe	E. Musgrave
Bromeliad	V. Reddicliffe	N. McCormack
Bromeliad	V. Reddicliffe	Janet Conard
Bromeliad	V. Reddicliffe	Lillian Smoleny

Tasting Table: January 1996

Sue Brewer: Banana Oatmeal Cake

T & C Ferreira: Apricot Cake

Lela: Dips & Crackers

Jud Newcombe: Carambolas

Kass: Fruit Punch

Musgrave: Peach Pie

V. Reddicliffe: Pound Cake, Mixed Cookies

Nancy McCormack: Salsa Cornmuffins; Banana, Chocolate, Bran Muffins

Janet Conard: Papaya Upside Down Cake, Fig Newtons

A. Burhenn: Cheese, Crackers, Fruit

Walter Vines: Candied Ginger

George Riegler: Tangelo & Satsuma hybrids

Lillian Wente: Peanut Butter Cookies

Vicky Cash: Solo Papaya

Linda Novak: Guava Pastries

New Members:

Vicky & Robert Cash 2165 Maine Street W. Melbourne, FL 32904 (407)722-2274

Charles & Marjorie Simkins 10238 Ehren Cut Off Land-O-Lakes, FL 34639 (813)996-4844

Thank You Thank You Thank You

To our long-time member who has refinanced our mortgages at a rate which substantially reduces our monthly payment burden and thus enables us to keep on growing. This generous individual wishes to remain anonymous, but we want to express our gratitude for this help.

What's Happening

January-February, 1996

by Paul Zmoda

What a winter we are having! Extreme cold, extreme wind, flooding in some states. Did I mention cold? I've seen six or seven frosts, so far, with the lowest temperature of 28°F one morning. Everything looks real bad at this point, but I must wait and see before pruning back my tropicals. Some trees may be goners, but I've taken the precaution of having spares in my greenhouse to replant, if necessary.

Ah, the greenhouse, 1900 cubic feet of "summer" amid all the harsh weather. Some sunny days, at 90° to 100°F, it is warmer than inside the home and is *the* place to be. The high humidity within helps newly grafted Atemoyas, Ilama, and red sugar apples to heal. Outdoors, the same trees *may* be lifeless. Inside, Bob Heath's

Carambola, "Pot-of gold" is carrying 3 large starfruit, while the Carambolas outdoors are dropping leaves and all their cold-damaged fruit. Inside, Papayas are healthy and growing, while those outdoors are history. Inside, a multitude of Passionfruit cuttings are vigorously rooting, while in the yard the parent plants are pushing up daisies.

From within the plastic walls I've just picked a basket full of large, red tomatoes, while in the vegetable garden their siblings are just memories. In fact, I have re-planted with Daikon and Indian radishes. Speaking of radishes, a volunteer radish hybrid is growing out there. It is red and white and round, but it is almost 4 inches in diameter (so far)! I'll let it go to seed to see if I can get lot's more next season.

The Case of the Avocado Trunk or Can a tree that's all wet take graft?

By Edward Musgrave

We have an Avocado tree in our front yard (Brandon area). It grew very well, but after it was about 20 feet tall and 10 years old, it still hadn't borne any fruit. I thought I would bud it. We were told to cut it down, and after it sprouted, to bud the sprouts.

After cutting it down, I decided to cut off a portion of the trunk that had no branches and put it into a tub of rainwater. The piece of trunk was about 3¼ inches in diameter and about 12 or 14 inches long.

The piece stayed in the water about 4-5 months and began to sprout. It got about 12 inches tall when the weather began to get colder. That was when it stopped growing.

I planted that trunk in a one gallon pot with good soil and kept the pot in a saucer of water to keep it from drying out. On January 4th, I grafted that sprout with a TopaTopa avocado bud. I am still waiting to see if that graft will take and if the stump will continue to grow.

(The above is a report by a member of an interesting observation/experiment in his yard. We would like to receive and publish such reports and growing tips from members more frequently. Just send your story to the club, attn.: newsletter, for it to be considered. Thanks, *the editor(s)*)

Fig Newtons-Janet Conard

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup sugar
 1 cup chopped figs
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup shortening
 1 cup sugar
 1 well beaten egg

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup milk
 1 tsp. vanilla
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. salt
 3 cups flour
 3 tsp. baking powder

Place the chopped figs in a saucepan with $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sugar and 1 cup boiling water. Boil 5 minutes, or until thick. Cool. This may be done in large batches and frozen in portions sized for later use. Cream shortening and 1 cup sugar. Add egg and beat until light. Mix milk and vanilla. Sift salt, flour and baking powder together and add alternately with milk to the creamed mixture. Blend well. Place a piece of wax paper on a board and sprinkle with flour. Roll out the dough on the floured wax paper in a rectangle, $\frac{1}{8}$ inch thick. Spread cooked figs over half the dough. Fold the uncovered half of the dough over the filling. (Lift the wax paper to fold the dough over). Bake at 400°F for 12 to 15 minutes.



The **Florida State Fair** begins February 8 and your Tampa Bay RFCI will be there.
 If you wish to help with the set up, clean up, or attending the booth and talking to visitors,
 call Sherry Baker at 689-7031.
 (If you help, you can get a pass to the fair!)

Tampa Bay Chapter RFCI
 313 Pruett Rd
 Seffner FL 33584



FIRST CLASS MAIL

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