



NEWSLETTER

JUNE 1996

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

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE: BOB HEATH
THERESA HEATH
ARNOLD STARK
LILLIAN STARK

PRESIDENT: CHARLES NOVAK

CHAPTER MAIL ADDRESS: 313 PRUETT RD, SEFFNER FL 33584
(Including Renewals)

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

NEXT MEETING - - - - - JUNE 9, 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.

PROGRAM- - - - - PINEAPPLES BY IAN GREIG. Ian Greig is a
pineapple grower in central Florida who
will be discussing the growing and nurturing
of pineapples, which is one of those fruit
that I personally feel everybody in central
Florida should be growing. The plants are
exotic looking and pineapples are certainly
a most delicious fruit. Mr. Greig is an
agronomist and worked for the Dole Company
for 21 years, in Thailand, the Philippines
and in Honduras. He is presently doing
personal research on pineapples. He will
have a slide presentation which should be
extremely interesting for us fruit growers
and fruit eaters.
We will also enjoy our tasting table which
has been very well supplied by our membership
recently. Keep up the good work. Hopefully,
our raffle table will also be well supplied at
this meeting as it was at the last meeting, and
we encourage our members to donate their extra
plants. The tasting table and raffle are two
more of the things that make our meetings
particularly interesting.



It's **Blueberry Time** - members Fred and Janis Strickland have opened their Blueberry Farm
for U-Pick activity. Hours are 9-5 on Saturday, 1-5 on Sunday, call for weekday hours.
Take I-4 to exit 10, south on Forbes Road, cross highway 92, cross highway 574 (M.L. King
Blvd.), cross over railroad tracks, third road on the left (Slaten Road), come to the end of the
road, red brick house. Buckets are available for picking, but bring your own containers to take
the berries home in. (813)754-3866. Price (as of 5/25/96) is \$2.00 per pound.

UNUSUAL FRUIT WITH COMMERCIAL POSSIBILITIES IN THE TAMPA BAY AREA

by Gene Joyner

Gene Joyner prefaced his talk with a discussion of the Central American trips developed by Tom Economou and himself. Gene is leading one to Costa Rica in July with only two openings left. Anyone interested may call Tom Economou for details and to sign up. If you miss this trip, there's another one planned in August to Costa Rica. Also, in the fall, the week before Thanksgiving, there will be a five day trip to the Yucatan in Mexico starting on Wednesday, with trips to the markets and also to the Mayan ruins at a real good price: five days for \$480. You can't beat that! It includes round trip air fare from Miami, a nice hotel and a tour bus. Every night in the public parks they have concerts and dancing which are all free, so one can enjoy those in the evening.

Gene also mentioned the Rare Fruit Council, Palm Beach Chapter tree sale coming up the 20th of July, with probably 4,000 to 5,000 plants for sale, similar to our tree sale every year. The sale will be at Drear Park at I-95 and Summit Boulevard.

At this point Gene switched to the main topic of his talk which is selling your excess fruit for extra income. He indicated that folks down in south Florida do very well at this with maybe five or six trees in their own back yard, and find it very, very profitable selling carambolas, lychees, longans, anonas, bananas, papayas and other fruit that are in demand. The hotels in Palm Beach solicit Rare Fruit Council members for excess fruit and regularly buy anything and everything from members' landscapes.

Gene began his list of profitable fruiting trees suitable for growing in central Florida with the carambola, which has become well known and popular in the last few years. It's a desirable dooryard fruit in central Florida and, as you go south, you begin to see commercial groves. It's

a very showy tree when in bloom with clusters of tiny flowers ranging in color from a light to a dark pink and literally covering the main branches of the tree. The trees are normally in bloom at this time of the year after mild winters, but you can hardly expect to see any blooming in this area after the winter we just had. After the first fruiting in the early summer, the trees should fruit again later in the year, producing two significant crops every year. The fruit is very attractive on the tree and always elicits an interest from people who seem them for the first time. The color of the fruit ranges from a deep orange color to a very light, almost white, yellow color. New cultivars are being developed with larger and sweeter fruit, ranging from 3" to 4" on up to close to 7" in length. A large tree can produce 300 to 400 pounds of fruit per year, which is a lot of fruit, a prolific tree.

Gene had slides of various carambola cultivars, the Mihtao, Thayer and Arkin. The Fwang Tung and the Maha are both excellent varieties. Carambolas have very few insect pests, especially notable that they are not bothered by the Caribbean fruit fly. Birds and rats will occasionally damage some carambolas but it is relatively rare.

Another fruit, one from Brazil, is the jaboticaba. There are some commercial plantings of jaboticaba in Broward County. The trees are small, never getting over about 20 feet with small leaves, 1" or an inch and a half, and reddish, peeling bark similar to the guava. To put in a commercial planting, the main problem is getting enough trees because not many jaboticabas are produced by nurseries. They are also very slow to begin producing fruit, anywhere from 6 to 10 years from seed. In addition, they are very difficult to graft and root very poorly from cuttings. Once they begin to bear, however, the flowers develop along the entire trunk and

main stems like little fluffs of cotton. The flowers only last for one day and then they wither and fall off, followed immediately by the little fruit which will develop in about 20 days from flowering to mature fruit ready to eat. Gene had slides of the jaboticaba in flower and also in fruit with the big black muscadine-looking fruit all up and down the main stems. Most bearing trees are seedlings and the fruit will range anywhere from 1/2" to 1-1/2" in diameter, so if you're going to grow some from seed, it would be wise to grow several so you can pick the one with the biggest fruit. They have a white pulp inside, very similar to a grape, but even better. In Brazil, the wine industry uses jaboticaba for making wine. It's a high quality wine sold all over Central and South America. Excellent jellies and ice creams may be made from jaboticaba fruit. And of course they may be eaten fresh out of hand. The jaboticaba is also virtually pest free so it doesn't require spraying for insects. It's also fairly cold hardy and also can stand wet feet, as they are native to swamps and flooding will not damage the roots. They also will do well in relatively dry conditions.

Another excellent fruit is the longan, a relative of the lychee, and like the lychee, comes from the Far East. It seems to be slightly more cold hardy than the lychee. Longans bloom in late February and March, and the flowers develop on the terminal spike. The fruit ripens in July and August, and looks like bunches of brown grapes. Like the lychee, the white pulp inside is protected by tough exterior skin. Fruit size will vary from 3/4" up to 1-1/2" in the better varieties. It's a very popular fruit in south Florida. The commercial growers get \$3.00 to \$3.50 a pound. One of the better varieties is the Kohala. The longan is a big tree reaching up to 40 feet if allowed to develop fully, but the tree may be topped and kept within bounds for easy harvesting. The research station in Homestead is presently evaluating a number of varieties and are hoping for

some even better than Kohala. The trees are very productive, producing an extensive amount of fruit, but seem to tend to be alternate year bearing to some degree. This is another tree that should be grafted or air layered to get superior fruit.

Another excellent fruit for growing commercial is the grape, both muscadines and bunch grapes. Muscadines grow quite large up to an inch in diameter in small bunches. They ripen in August and on into September, and muscadine grapes are easier to grow and have fewer disease problems than bunch grapes, so for commercial production, Gene rates them as his No. 1 choice. Bunch grapes produce bigger clusters of fruit and for those people who are buying fresh fruit, this is always an important consideration. They like the big clusters rather than just the small bunches available with the muscadines. For growing in your backyard, an overhead arbor is probably most convenient, but in commercial production, grapes are usually grown on vines, between posts with the vines trained along the wires. The main thing is to establish them where you can harvest the fruit easily. Gene showed us slides of some bunch grapes, Blue Lake, which is an old variety, and the Lake Emerald, likewise a long time release. They have been superseded by new ones such as Conquistador, which are somewhat superior. But if you're making jellies for yourself, or home wines, both the Blue Lake and Lake Emerald are not too bad. The Lake Emerald is grown at Eden Vineyards in Fort Myers. Most of their wine production goes to Disney World.

Some of the muscadine varieties, like Triumph and Fry, may grow to an inch and a half or an inch and three quarters in diameter and have an excellent spicy flavor. Bunch grapes require a considerable amount of fertilizer and they are also subject to anthracnose that affect the bunches during the ripening period. Muscadine grapes, however, are less subject to disease problems. A good muscadine grape vineyard can produce as much as

9 tons of grapes to the acre.

The loquat is a fruit that you may not consider for commercial sales, but it is widely accepted and it fruits at the time of the year when there is very little fresh fruit being produced, namely in the winter. The loquat is cold hardy and is normally not affected by cold weather, although there may be some fruit damage from freezes in the winter time. The tree may grow to as much as 30 feet tall at maturity with a beautiful umbrella shaped canopy. The fruit may be purchased anywhere from mid January to early April. The average fruit is about an inch in diameter but some cultivars produce fruit up to 2" in diameter. The fruit vary widely in flavor with 30 to 40 named varieties being grown in Florida alone.

However, most of the nurseries just sell seedlings. Of course, most of the seedlings have good quality fruit. The fruit is attractive and appeals to most people, both visually and in taste, yellow to orange in color when ripe and with flesh inside frequently similar in color. There are one or two rather large brown seeds in the center. The main problem we have with loquats in Florida is the Caribbean fruit fly, which lays eggs in the fruit to produce maggots. The fruit is excellent for making jellies and jams, and may be preserved for drying. It also makes good ice cream and milk shakes. It's a tree easy to grow and, even in poor soil and without fertilizer, will usually produce a good crop. From seed the tree takes two to three years to produce fruit. Grafted trees may flower the next year.

The persimmon is another tree that is well adapted to central Florida and is grown commercially to a limited extent in this area. There are 10 to 20 varieties of persimmons that are available at nurseries. The fruit varies in size and shape, being oval, round, almost square, pear shaped, depending on the variety. In addition to the shape and size, we have the astringent and non-astringent varieties so that a lot of variation is available in persimmons.

Astringent varieties have to be soft ripe to eat. The non-astringent varieties can be eaten hard ripe like an apple. Persimmons also lend themselves to drying and the dried fruit are excellent in flavor. The fruit ripens in the fall, October and November.

That's when you see them appearing in the markets. The trees are deciduous, not affected by the cold, and in the spring they leaf out in March or early April and start setting their fruit. Some varieties grow as far south as Homestead and of course on further north into Georgia and Alabama. Chestnut Hill Nursery up near Alachua is one of the largest sources of persimmons in Florida, where about 25 varieties are produced. Some varieties weigh in close to a pound, which is a big persimmon. Persimmons in Florida are usually grafted onto a native persimmon tree which will stand wet feet so that persimmons will grow in wet places with brief periods of flooding. The main pests on persimmons may be wildlife and birds, but otherwise they are fairly pest free.

Another fruit that has attracted a lot of attention in the last few years is the white sapote, which is grown considerably in California commercially. The white sapote is originally from Mexico and makes a rather large tree, as big as a mango or avocado. The tree normally produces a crop in May or June, and later in the year a smaller crop in the fall. Fruit can range from 1-1/2" to 3" in diameter, greenish yellow when ripe, it's very thin skinned with a white custard-like flesh inside. They may be eaten fresh out of hand and also white sapotes may be used in breads, muffins, milk shakes, ice creams. It's definitely a dessert fruit. They may be picked green and allowed to ripen at almost any stage of development and will soften and become edible. But they are best when allowed to reach full maturity. Under the right conditions, white sapotes are very prolific. Gene says their three trees down in Palm Beach are really loaded at this point, with maybe 500 fruit on each of the trees.

In the Homestead area there are some commercial groves that have been planted in the last few years and they are having excellent results so far as people accepting the fruit. White sapotes are fairly cold hardy, about like carambolas, and once they get about 2" in diameter, they should be fairly safe. (Editor's note:

personally, I had virtually no damage on my white sapotes at my house.) Better varieties have been propagated and named, and this is a tree that we recommend being grafted for home use for the usual reasons: early fruiting and better quality fruit.

Tasting Table: March 1996

Lillian Wente: Oatmeal/Peanut Butter Cookies

Novak: Tropical Cupcakes, Blueberries, Fruit Punch

Janet Conard: Ritz Peanut Butter Crackers in White Chocolate

Polly Shewfelt: Gleaners Strawberry Jam; Jaboticaba Jelly/Okechobee

Kass Scott-Rivera: Cranberry Juice

Marjorie Simkins: Corn Tortillas

Pat Jean: Orange Cream Cake

Beth Reddicliffe: Chocolate Chip Cookies

Lillian Stark: Limequat Ade

Zmoda: Blackberries; Cactus Pickles

Riegler: Peaches

Connie Ferreira: Tropical Cake

Musgraves: Ambrosia

Nancy McCormack: Corn Muffins

Al Hendry: Chinese Olives

Al Roberts: Grape Drink

New Members:

Ricky & Aleida Maseda 1717 W. Atkinson St. Tampa, FL 33604-1015 (813)932-4219

Steve Tinsky 8009 Ola Ave. Tampa, FL 33604 (813)930-93066



If you are interested in the Interamerican Society of Tropical Horticulture Congress to be held in Curitiba, Brazil, October 20-25, member Al Hendry has information on registration, hotels, and tours. Please call him at (813)977-2988



Congratulations to member Monica Brandies on the publication of her new book:

Herbs and Spices for Florida Gardens

Monica is a very knowledgeable gardener and an excellent writer, so this book is one that should be in each of our home libraries. We expect to have copies available for sale at our next meeting.



Do you have an **E-MAIL** address???

We will soon be printing our current membership directory and I would like to add a section of E-mail addresses for all our computer-involved members. Please send me your address either by computer (STARKLM@AOL.com) or the old fashioned way (by US mail).



Tom Economou has announced a number of exciting up-coming botanical adventure tours. Members who have gone on his previous tours have been delighted. Look for the brochures at the meeting, or call Tom at (305)285-7173

From the President

Charles Novak

I want to thank all the mothers who came to our last meeting. I hope the Cherry of the Rio Grande you received produces many tasty fruits. The program by Gene Joyner was outstanding.

Our trip to the Keys was very interesting and informative. We saw many fantastic fruit trees; from large Mangosteen trees to the best Papayas I have ever tasted. I want to especially thank Bill Whitman for showing us his fabulous collection of fruit trees and for offering to have us return when more fruit is ripe, (in about 3 months). If a member wants to arrange the trip, please call or speak to me at the next meeting.

The Fruit and Spice Park will have another Florida Keys Fruit Safari on October 5, 1996. The Safari is well worth the \$25.00 fee. You may see and taste fruit that you have only read about. I was able to taste for the first time the following fruits: Malay Apple (*Syzygium malaccense*), Star Apple (*Chrysophyllum cainito*) and Imbe (*Garcinia livinstonei*). The Star Apple was, in my opinion, far superior to the other fruits. We visited an 80 year-old planting of Sapodilla (*Manikara zapota*) on No Name Key; and even saw some Key deer.

The following is a list of fruit trees and the club members who have a real good grasp of how to grow them and where to obtain them.

Annonas	Modesto Arencibia	884-7788
Apple	Roy Grear	948-1883
Banana	Bob Baker	689-7031
Blue Berries	Fred Strickland	754-3866
Carambola	Bob Heath	289-1068
Citrus	George Riegler	996-4619
Guava	Arnold Stark	621-4987
Kiwi	Charles Novak	754-1399
Lychee	Mrs. Frank Wells	(941) 967-1631
Palms	Frank Tintera	884-1927
Passion Fruit	Paul Zmoda	932-2469
Paw Paw	Gerald Amyot	754-8709
Pineapple	Lillian Smoleny	689-3547
Organic gardening	Samm Philmore	681-7129

There will be a short board meeting after the club meeting.

Raffle: May 1996

Plant Name	Donor	Winner
Blueberries	Charles Novak	Samm Philmore
Dwarf Pomegranate	Charles Novak	Dan Williams
Vanilla Vine	Charles Novak	V. Reddicliffe
Jakfruit	Charles Novak	Kass
Guiana Chestnut	Charles Novak	Dan Willama
Mahogaby Tree	Charles Novak	?
Norfolk Pine	Charles Novak	Samm Philmore
Beade Garcinia	Charles Novak	Ed Musgrave
Var. Pineapple	Charles Novak	Polly Shewfelt
Pineapple	Stark	Dan Williams
Lippia	Stark	Kass
Brazos Blackberry	Polly Shewfelt	Heath
Nopale Cactus (2)	Zmoda	Pat Cherundolo
Nopale Cactus	Zmoda	?
LaLot	Zmoda	Ed Musgrave
LaLot	Zmoda	M. McCourt
Sesban	Zmoda	M. McCourt
Sugar Apple	Zmoda	T. Ferreira
Tobacco	Zmoda	V. Reddicliffe
White Sapote	Tony Ferreira	Janet Conard
Fig	Janet Conard	Polly Shewfely
Loquat	Janet Conard	Pat Jean
Grafted Avocadp	George Riegler	Janet Conard
Grafted Avocadp	George Riegler	Dan Williams
Grafted Avocadp	George Riegler	Samm Philmore
Papaya	Charles Simkins	Pat Jean
Fig	Heath	Steve Tinsky
Casabanana	Heath	Al Hendry
Casabanana (2)	Heath	Joyner
Tree Basil	Heath	Al Jean
Rose Apple	Heath	?
Loquat	Ed Musgrave	Pat Cherundolo
Loquat	Ed Musgrave	Vern Reddicliffe
Loquat	Ed Musgrave	Elaine Sarrasin
Loquat (2)	Ed Musgrave	?
Jalapeño Pepper	Samm Philmore	Elaine Sarrasin
Lemon Grass	Samm Philmore	V. Reddicliffe
Lemon Grass	Samm Philmore	Dan Willaims
Lemon Grass	Samm Philmore	Nancy McCormack
Echinacea (Purple Cone Flower)	Samm Philmore	Nancy McCormack
Echinacea (Purple Cone Flower)	Samm Philmore	Maria McCourt
Bromeliad	V. Reddicliffe	Dan Mitchell
Bromeliad	V. Reddicliffe	Kass
Bromeliad	V. Reddicliffe	Polly Shewfelt
Loquat	Frank Costa	?
Pomegranate	?	N. McCormack
Blackberry	?	Dan Mitchell

NOTICE: All club members are asked to contribute any ideas that will improve our monthly plant raffle. Please bring your ideas to our meetings.

WHAT'S HAPPENING

May-June 1996

By Paul Zmoda

Who among us will be the first to fruit *Asimina triloba*-the pawpaw? I am certainly giving it a good effort. Florida grown pawpaw seeds were planted last July in taproot pots. The seedlings are up and doing quite well so far. Another pawpaw, 3 years old and of Missouri origin, was recently stolen. It was 20 inches tall and leafed out early. That one was to complement my 4 foot specimen. I also lost my 'Skocut' fig during the theft. This was a gift from Mr. Robert Kalchthaler, a fruit-growing friend who lives in Pennsylvania.

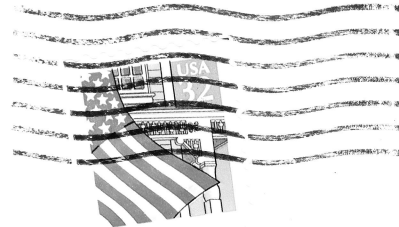
The muscadine grapes are growing vigorously and have oodles of tiny flowers up and down the canes. Heirloom corn 'Bloody Butcher' tasselled at 80 days and has filled ears by 90. I hope to have extra seed for the club soon. I grafted 'Flame' grapefruit onto the 'Ruby Red' tree. 'Chandler' pomelo is now grafted to my pomelo project tree. I still wish to put 'Siam Sweet' and 'Hirado Buntan' onto it. If you have budwood, please give me a call. I would also like budwood of that dark red-fleshed grapefruit that one of our members has.

Maroon guava 'Flame' has many buds on it and the Colombian soursop, or Guanabana, recently bloomed. And what a huge flower it was!

New plantings: 'Zill Dark' Surinam cherry seedling, *Passifloras alata* and *Serrato digitata*, okra and a Solanaceous (potato-tomato family) plant whose fruit is said to be baseball sized. The species is unknown at this time.

New seeds sprouting: Pistache, tea and passion flowers.

Tampa Bay Chapter RFCI
313 Pruett Rd
Seffner FL 33584



FIRST CLASS MAIL

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