



NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2000

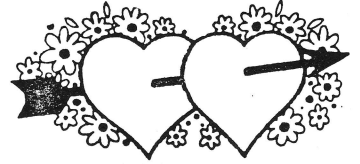
TAMPA BAY CHAPTER of the
RARE FRUIT COUNCIL INTERNATIONAL, Inc.

EDITORS: BOB HEATH, THERESA HEATH, CHARLES NOVAK, LINDA NOVAK, JIM LEE, SALLY LEE

PRESIDENT: CHARLES NOVAK

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

NEXT MEETING: FEBRUARY 13 2000



PROGRAM: Because of medical problems, Tom Economou had to postpone his scheduled February meeting with our group til March. In light of this the Board decided this might be a good time to have a hands-on grafting & air layering demonstration and a question & answer session. This should be informative and interesting for all members, novice and professional alike. So sit down and make a list of questions which you think may be of interest to others as well as yourself. We will also have our tasting table and plant raffle, and we would like to this this opportunity to thank all those who contribute so generously to both. Without the plant raffle and tasting table, our meetings would be rather dull.

WHAT'S HAPPENING

Jan-Feb 2000

by Paul Zmoda

I've been enjoying this cool weather; it's not so cold as to threaten any fruit trees (it may actually be beneficial) and it's not too hot to prune trees. All our fruit trees that needed pruning are now finished. This includes all grapes, figs, apples, peaches, almonds, blueberries, mulberries, plums, chestnuts, pecans and pomegranates.

I do not advise growing mulberries unless you are willing to prune them annually; an unpruned mulberry quickly turns into an unruly monster. You should tame this tree to serve you by trimming it severely each winter season. Since they are so vigorous and the berries are borne on new shoots, you can cut off branches that have grown up to 20 feet in the past year. Some folks routinely whack the whole tree to the ground at this time and easily pick fruit from the bushy shrub which springs forth. I prefer to maintain a strong framework of branches on a tree which reaches up to 12 to 15 feet after pruning.

When considering what varieties of fruit trees to plant, you frequently see a reference to "chilling hours". This is the number of hours below 45°F that these trees require in order to successfully bloom and then set fruit. In Tampa we see roughly 200 to 300 chilling hours each winter. The chilling hours increase further north and east. Look for trees that only need chilling hours suitably matched to your planting area. Trees which require higher hours may grow all right for a time, but may never flower or may slowly die out. Trees which require a lot less than your area may bloom so early that frosts kill the new blooms and shoots.

We are very pleased with the passion fruit 'Frederick'. This vine has grown vigorously all year with little care and is providing us with a great many red fruits for juice and fresh eating.

New Plantings: Chinese vegetables, strawberries and yaupon hollies.

From the President
Charles Novak

Thanks to everyone who helped pick citrus at George Riegler's. The weather was great – and so were the hamburgers and hotdogs. It would be difficult to have the Citrus Celebration without George's donation of the many varieties of citrus for the tasting table and for display.

Again, our club members did a great job at the Citrus Celebration. The morning started off rather cold but was very pleasant by noon. We had a good turnout but I was hoping for a larger crowd. I'm sure the cold temperature and Bucs football game traffic had an affect on attendance. We hope to have a financial report available at the February meeting. Club members who helped with the Citrus Celebration and/or Fall Plant Festival and have not already received a club T-shirt please contact me. Please cast your vote (ballot in this newsletter) on whether or not to have the Citrus Celebration next year. I don't know how to tell the members who worked how much they are appreciated other than with a big

Thanks!!!

March is fast approaching and we will be electing club board members. If you are interested in being on the board please contact me or Albert and Pat Jean (813-973-3619). The board is very important for the future of the club. Being on the board will not take a lot of your time - only about an hour after the regular club meeting.

The following is a list of scheduled programs/speakers:

February 10-21	Manning State Fair Exhibit
February 13	Question and Answer session/Grafting & Air Layering Workshop
March 12	Tom Economou
April 9	USF Plant Sale
May 14	Gene Joyner

Please note a change in the above schedule. Tom Economou will speak at the March club meeting. Several club members have requested a grafting workshop and question and answer session. February seems like the perfect time to schedule this type of program. It should be informative for all club members.

If you get to the State Fair, please stop by the club's exhibit (Family Living Building, Horticulture Department). Feel free to give your opinion on this year's exhibit and to offer suggestions for next year's exhibit.

It's not too early to start getting your plants ready for the USF Spring Plant Sale. You receive 70% of the selling price, less taxes.

Board meeting after regular meeting.

Happy Valentine's Day!



A VISIT WITH GEORGE RIEGLER

by Art Hedstrand

George's home is situated on the southeast side of a lake, which moderates freezing weather. However, as George points out, this is no guarantee: example, the mid sixties freeze which killed the family grove and forced George to "go to work" in heavy construction.

Large stately cypress trees rim the lake, with a break opposite the house to afford views of sunsets and wild ducks, and to provide good air flow. The yard is rectangular, with the long dimension running north-south of, I would guess, about 5 acres. Citrus trees run along the east boundary, several rows across the south, part way up the west and in the north.

In the south middle is a vegetable garden and two greenhouses, one of which George just elevated in height to accommodate taller specimens such as jakfruit. The house and garage-barn are in the middle, with a smaller greenhouse in the north middle. This is an old homestead with all the ambiance of large mature trees such as oaks, cedar and cypress and a very tall East Palatka holly. A tall date palm near the house is from a seed acquired during George's honeymoon! It is too humid for date production in Florida, although George has picked fruit from a palm on a causeway in upper Tampa Bay!

George appreciates flower beauty as well as fruit and has ornamental shrubs and spices from the Dutch Indies. As you drive into his yard, you may see a gorgeous massive Jacobina with its fluffy yellow flower panicles.

Toward the lake is a cardamon spice, blue taro (with no tubers), heliconias and Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow brunfelsia. (My mom used to crush cardamon seeds by rolling a bottle over them - a great flavoring for her Swedish coffee bread.) A white flowered yellow passion fruit broadcasts its fruit from on high in a cypress. They are on the tart side and have a tough hull to withstand the long drop. George just tosses chayote fruit into suitable support bushes in the spring. He has 3 varieties, the improved smooth green, the white and also the old green in a 40-50 foot cypress in the southwest corner.

Li and Lang jujubes are loaded with fruit and are almost prostrate from heavy cropping, contrasted with the usual upright growth habit. They fruit twice a year for George.

George grows Dixie, Welder and edible skinned muscadine grapes. Toward the lake is a spectacular bush - in the hibiscus family, evidently. At the Sunday of fruit picking for the Citrus Celebration it was at its prime with panicles of pale lavender blossoms that held everyone in awe. A Baldwin pear hasn't done well (Charles thinks not enough chilling hours). We're skirting the citrus on the north end by the greenhouse (a Hirado Buntan pommelo here). There's a large 'Wonderful' pomegranate which does well. Manzana bananas are on the edge of the drainage ditch to the north (apple bananas are my favorite).

Interestingly, George has Tanenashi persimmon cultivars of August and November fruiting. In this northeast corner are mammoth Russian mulberry, yellow Cassia fistula bush form and tree form from Dade City, a blue Cassia from the Indies yet to flower, a large Oliver loquat (a good cultivar) and smaller Wolf loquat of higher acid fruit, better for cooking.

Near the north greenhouse are peaches and yellow Cattley guava. Some really spiny

Brazilian scarlet pineapples are near the east line - a good flavored, although tart, fruit. A red seedless guava is tucked in among the citrus.

Near the south end of the north greenhouse are Sri Com Bangam and Fwang Tung carambolas and a loquat from Johnny Montano, which may bear fruit this year - it's flowering profusely - and a Geffner atemoya.

In the north greenhouse are cacao, sugar apple, Australian Red sugar apple, cherimoya African Pride atemoya, 3 annonas, abiu, Chansaw Mountain soursop, Poshti schleroderma out of Tikal, "Boxten" lychee (that's the phonetic for the Chinese name!) and Sweet Cliff lychee. In the middle is a water bed which George ingeniously uses for bottom heating of seedlings.

Continuing on: two cashews, Ohia lychee, ilama, Tonnase avocado, a Tikal brown sapote which is root pruned in preparation for a move out of this smaller greenhouse in March. There's a long-fruited Russell avocado, atemoya and sugar apple from Bob and Vivian Murray, Hak Ip lychee and green Ischia fig. The fig is in the greenhouse because it can't stand rain; it's an open eye variety which splits and sours.

Outside are Costus screw ginger (spiral growth of leaves), pistachio, maya chaya (George peels the stem and eats it raw like asparagus), a costus from Borneo with spiral leaf.

A small Ettinger Mexican race avocado needs pushing, a Coon Two carambola - Vivian Murray (guess why its name!) and just north of the house is king's crown Brazilian plume - a very attractive shrub. By the south side of the house are black sapote at the door and another at the corner, Asinte banana, tree and bush type coffee, variegated white/red hibiscus with red flower, macadamia of 3 leaf/whorl and 4/leaf whorl.

Heading south from the driveway after our circuit around the house, along the east side are white sapote from Homestead/Redland in flower, fig, pink cactus rose, tall cherry of the Rio Grande, tall governor's plum (Wayne Clifton). Near the greenhouses an early Tanenashi persimmon and others.

At the southwest is what appears to be a star jasmine about 50 feet up a pine tree! Then that common chayote way up a cypress. There's a row of Oriental guavas with big fruit, an Arkin carambola, very tall Mexican papayas of '3rd sex', neither male nor female, with round or long fruit, and a tall Tonnage avocado.

A group of very large peach trees (about 35 years old) is becoming unproductive. This age disproves UF assertion that peaches have only a 15 year life expectancy.

In the south greenhouse George has let the Granadilla passion fruit vine escape out through the roof, from which it climbed to the top of the adjacent Duncan grapefruit. It produced 7 of those big fruit this year. The greenhouse contains lychees, 3 longans, a jaboticaba, 3 mangos, jakfruit, tipen and other hot peppers.

Adjacent to the greenhouse are bananas: Cavendish, Praying Hand, Thousand Finger and across the pathway, Gran Naine, of which George is particularly fond. This is a typical grocery store banana which produces heavily on a dwarf plant with heavy stalks. Nearby is a huge Mexican sunflower with delicious fragrance. This yellow flower must be related to the red flowered Tithonia, which doesn't grow as tall.

Beyond the Gran Naine to the southwest is a large planting of banana cultivars. Many of these fell over after a heavy rain. Their roots were relatively small and located in the rich black topsoil, with no penetration into the sand beneath. What is the answer to this problem? Perhaps the sheet composting with wood chips has to be amended with sand to cause the roots to seek further for nutrients. For one thing, George is going toward the dwarf cultivars, like Gran Naine.

The third greenhouse with newly elevated roof is full of miscellaneous fruit trees in various stages of propagation. Some will have to make way for the potentially taller jakfruit and others slated for this hi-rise.

Near the garage-barn is a hog plum with red or yellow fruit from Central America. This is probably the same tree as the "Glory Cedar" of Dominica. There they use large cuttings which root and are used as living fence posts. The wood is resistant to termites.

George has another unknown tropical tree: huge, but hasn't flowered. Between garage and lake is a huge seedling carambola of decent fruit. Before a freeze killed the grafted (Dr.) Newcomb cultivar to the ground, this was arguably the largest carambola in Florida. Some more of the huge Sasanqua camellias (love that fragrance!), a tangor with non-puffy, loose peel and seedling red navels bring us back to the lakefront opening west of the house and that huge East Palatka holly.

This tour with a very gracious (and patient!) host was a lesson in fruit culture and history and an excellent example of what a fruit garden can be - truly inspiring. Thank you, George, so very much.

MEMBERS CORNER

FOR SALE: Troybilt tiller in excellent condition, heavy duty. \$350.00
Raffina Dindial 996-2082.



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CITRUS CELEBRATION CONTINUATION VOTE

The 3rd annual Citrus Celebration is history. The question has been asked whether we should have Citrus Celebration No. 4. A large number of our members are required to work, some for many hours, to put this festival together, picking and washing fruit at George Riegler's, picking and washing fruit at the Citrus Arboretum, setting up tables and tents, unloading and reloading citrus and other trees, baking and cooking items for the tasting table, and the long day during the affair itself.

George Riegler donates a lot of citrus and several members cook and bake extensively to provide tasty citrus products. On the positive side is the excitement and pleasure of the social event, hamburgers, hot dogs and potato salad, and general companionship and togetherness. The elected officers would like a democratic vote by all those who worked on the Citrus Celebration concerning the continuation. Please fill out the form below and bring it to the February meeting.

Do you think the Citrus Celebration is a worthwhile project and should be continued?

Yes____ No____

Does it offer a worthwhile service to the community?

Yes____ No____

Is it worth the effort?

Yes____ No____

If your answers are yes, we will entertain suggestions for improvement and changes to make for a bigger and better Festival.

PLASTIC BAGS FOR PLANTS

by William F. Whitman

Clear plastic bags offer a simple and easy means of obtaining nearly 100% relative humidity for the air surrounding a potted plant so enclosed. These miniature greenhouses should not be exposed to direct sunlight where the heat trapped could cause the plant to die. After a plant has been so enclosed for over several days, caution should be used in removing the bag; this is done gradually to allow the plant's acclimatization to the difference between the moist air prevailing inside the bag and the drier air outside. Listed below are some situations in which plastic bags covers have been found useful.

- Rooting cuttings. This offers an easy, inexpensive alternative to using mist propagation. Plastic bags are also effective for enclosing weak air layers that may otherwise fail to survive after being removed from the parent tree.
- Rejuvenation of shipped-in plants. Is that shipment of live plants more dead than alive? It's amazing how plastic bags can save them.
- Plant protection from cold. Bringing potted plants indoors during a cold front? The warm dry air of your home can cause desiccation and injury of the foliage. Enclosing in plastic bags solves this problem.
- Leaving for summer, no one to water potted plants? Cover plants with plastic bags, seal, put in shade and they will be alive when you return.



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