



# NEWSLETTER

APRIL 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: BOB HEATH

MEETINGS ARE HELD ON THE 2nd SUNDAY OF THE MONTH @ 2:00 PM.

NEXT MEETING: APRIL 8th & 9th @ USF (SEE PROGRAM BELOW)

PROGRAM: THE USF PLANT FESTIVAL IS SCHEDULED FOR OUR REGULAR MEETING DATE, THE 8th & 9th of APRIL. Consequently, our scheduled program for April will be participation in the USF Spring Plant Festival. All members are invited to participate & bring plants to donate or sell. Parking is free but admission is \$2.00, for which the Club will reimburse workers and participants in the Sale. This is an interesting affair and well worth the \$2.00 admission. Likewise, it is a social event as well as a money maker for the Club. There will be no tasting table or plant raffle this month. But we desperately need workers. Let's make this USF Sale our big one. Please join us!

## \* U.S.F. Spring Plant Festival \*

The RFCI will be participating in the USF Plant Festival on April 8 & 9, 2000. This is an important fund raiser and all members are invited to attend, to assist in the Sale, to sell plants, to enjoy the camaraderie and to visit other groups.

Our participation will begin around 1:00 Friday afternoon, April 7, raising tents, setting up tables, arranging plants and posters, til about 6:00 pm.

On Saturday, April 8, the Gardens will be open from 7:00 am til 9:00 am for our final preparations. Price for admission is \$2.00, reimbursed by the Club.

The front gate will close at 8:30 am Saturday & Sunday, and participants will have to enter by the side south gate after the front gate closes, until 9:00.

From 7:00 am til 9:00 am on Saturday & Sunday, traffic will be one way, in the front gate and out the side gate. The Festival will end at 4:00 pm on Saturday & 3:00 pm on Sunday, and only after 4:15 and 3:15 pm respectively, will we be allowed to bring vehicles in to re-supply or remove plants.

Parking for participants not bringing supplies or plants is across the street from the front entrance to the Gardens.

The USF Botanical Gardens takes 10% of our gross sales; the remaining 90% will be split 70/20 between the participant and the RFCI, so mark your plants accordingly, remembering that you get 70% of the selling price, less taxes.

We have provided I.D. cards for RFCI workers. Only those with I.D. cards will be allowed in before the Sale begins. If you are refused admittance, someone from our group will vouch for you to gain your admittance. If you need an I.D. card, call Bob Heath @ 813-289-1068 in the evening.

## DIRECTIONS TO THE USF SPRING PLANT FESTIVAL:

Enter the Gardens from Bruce B. Downs one block north of Fowler, turn East on Pine Street, and Left at Alumni Drive. Go one block to the Gardens entrance.

## A Time for Change

I have had the honor of serving as your president for the past four years and I am happy to pass the presidency to the very capable and dedicated Bob Heath. These past years have been very busy (hectic at times) but also enjoyable and productive. Our successes (Armory Sales, USF Spring and Fall Sales, Fruitarama, three Citrus Celebrations, State Fair Exhibits, etc.) would not have been possible if it weren't for the efforts put forth by the Boards of Directors and by the members of this club. We are fortunate to have committed people who are willing to give so much of their time and labor to our club activities. I would like to thank everyone for their support. Let's give to Bob all the assistance he needs during this next year.

Charles Novak

| MARCH PLANT RAFFLE   |                |                 |
|----------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| PLANT                | DONOR          | WINNER          |
| Orange Berry         | Heath          | R. Shigemura    |
| Cherry - Rio Grande  | "              | Zmoda           |
| Eugenia Confusa      | "              | Sal Russo       |
| Rangoon Creeper      | "              | ?               |
| White Sapote         | "              | Judy Cimafranca |
| Red Passion Fruit    | "              | ?               |
| Avocado              | Lee            | Duane Reed      |
| "                    | "              | R. Shigemura    |
| "                    | "              | Steven Branesky |
| Boston Fern (2)      | "              | ?               |
| Jak Fruit (2)        | "              | ?               |
| Avocado              | "              | Judy Cimafranca |
| Pillar Cactus        | Stark          | Sal Russo       |
| " " (3)              | "              | ?               |
| Black Surinam Cherry | "              | R. Shigemura    |
| Malay Apple          | "              | ?               |
| Sapodilla            | "              | Peyron          |
| Orange Cactus Ginger | "              | Susan McAveety  |
| Meyer Lemons         | B. Reddicliffe | ?               |
| Planting Pots        | "              | Paul Branesky   |
| Blue Flower          | ?              | Theresa Heath   |
| Fertilizer           | Zmoda          | Heath           |
| Noni                 | ?              | Stark           |

## A VISIT WITH JIM GASSETT

by Art Hedstrand

Jim contributed samples of his unique fruit for the Citrus Celebration and we greatly appreciate his generosity not only for that, but also for his very informative conversation and his time.

Fay and Jim live on Hwy 17 just south of Bartow. The 6+ acre farm is planted mostly in citrus and a small U-pick muscadine patch. Their home is situated in the front middle and surrounded by an island of lawn and lovely flowering plants: evidence of Fay's loving touch.

There are very large pecan trees in the front and to the north: Gloria Grand, Sumner, Cape Fear, Stuart, Success, Farley & "GKW's" (God Knows What!). Jim particularly likes Cape Fear, which sizes up well for him. Gloria Grand nuts are of large size but a shy bearer. The Sumner nut is long with good production and high quality. Interestingly, one out of 30 has a flat side.

At the northwest of the house is a pink Tabebuia. Close to the carport stands a stately Rupicola palm at about 15 feet. Its narrow fronds are striking and it has Phoenix type thorns, although not as large.

Beyond the carport in the back yard we see some neat hibiscus, a large red penta and a tall slender Mexicola avocado in full bloom. Directly behind the house is a huge Hardee avocado, also in full bloom. The Hardee is a red skinned West Indian fruit. It has frozen to the ground in the past. Next to it is a huge Brunswick fig in size matching the citrus trees. A loaded Thales loquat is on the south edge of the lawn.

Leaving the canopy of large citrus we proceed east into a more open area with nursery plants and younger citrus. To the south is a row of large fig trees; Nero, Texas Everbearing, Celeste. The Nero is a strong flavored purple fig. Adjacent is Okame persimmon, an astringent variety which Jim likes, although his preference is non-astringent. It's crowded here with even a small cabbage palm next to the Okame. Jim never removes a seedling cabbage palm until it's big enough to eat.

He is propagating an Indian mulberry with nematode resistant fig root stock. I don't know its hardiness but I assume it's tender. The large figs are apparently self rooted, with no nematode problems.

We're going to wander through the citrus planting and taste-test some of the better fruit. I asked Jim how many varieties he had: 6 white navels, 2 red navels, 7 tangerines, 4 tangelos, grapefruit - 5 red, 2 pink, 2 white, 3-4 blood oranges and the common round oranges such as Hamlin, Valencia, Roble & Pineapple, a 'red' pommelo, Hirado Buntan and a white from California which is poor.

Jim had a sample blood orange a friend brought from Arizona - real dark purple color, good flavor. Bloods in Florida don't produce the anthocyanins which are the factors which make the coloring. The cultivar from a grove in Homeland had large size and good flavor. The Moro 'from California' was good.

The Noble tangerine has a nice dark color and is sweet; it ripens with Hamlin oranges. Osceola is Jim's favorite tangerine: deep color and sweet. We tasted a Summerfield navel (white fleshed) which was past its prime but delightfully soft and sweet. This cultivar is planted extensively in Brevard County with smaller fruit than Washington but more productive. A Roble early orange introduced by a Tampa doctor via Spanish ships tasted good and is used for root stock as well.

Of the navels, the Dream, an original Washington from Brazil, is Jim's favorite. He also has an interesting tree in his red navel planting with extremely dense foliage

hiding the fruit. The 'star' at the attachment stem base is red instead of the usual green - evidently a mutation.

The Red Ruby grapefruit is early: 2 months before other cultivars. It is good flavored although I liked the white navel grapefruit as well.

The Ortanique tangelo from Jamaica is an unusual yellow skinned small orange which Jim calls 'Hawaiian Punch Orange' for want of the correct name. It is excellent flavored.

Ponkan Mandarin is very good; a numbered navel best of the group of numbered varieties. He uses 16-4-16 fertilizer including trace elements, and doesn't spray.

We wandered from east of the house to the north, passing equipment sheds, persimmons, and a nice vegetable garden with broccoli in evidence. In the northwest is the muscadine planting with mostly Ison nursery cultivars. Jim cultivates Supreme, Darlene, Pam, Late Fry, Dixie, Summit, Dixieland, Farrer, Sweet Jenny, Ison and Early Fry. At pruning he recommends extending the cane arms only 7 feet each side of the trunk, with pruning to 5 spurs from the previous year's growth each year. This makes a very bushy looking mass but very productive. I can't wait to see how this looks in the summer.

The persimmons are scattered throughout the grove near the equipment sheds. An Ormond still has 3 fruit which the birds had pecked; Jim had just picked the last 2 good fruit. This cultivar is good flavored and is a sight with fruit hanging into February on completely bare limbs. He likes Midia which fruits every year and Fuyugaki. It has more juice and is more flat shaped. There's Triumph, Tanenashi, an unknown similar to Fuyu, Suruga which Jim doesn't like, and Tamopan. He has several cultivars which haven't fruited yet such as Hanafuyu, Saijo, Izu and others. Jim wants bud wood of good non-astringents (if anyone has any please contact me).

Among miscellaneous fruit: Mayhaw hasn't fruited, Bruces Plum doesn't get enough chilling hours, Gulf Ruby Plum is good; bears golf ball-sized fruit. Ocklawaha peach (nematode-resistant root stock) is a favorite - it bears 3 times a year! The old Jewel peach does well. Ocklawaha blackberry sprawls along the ditch swale near the highway. Florida Home pear might be ok. Meadows pear fruits at Ron Lambert's place but hasn't bloomed here. Jim uses a pear root stock which Richard Harrison brings down from Dothan. Smaller fig plants include: Hunt - a red fruited cultivar from Lambert, Lsu Purple, Brown Turkey, Kresdorn Brown Turkey. Apples have not been successful for Jim.

He has a small sugar cane patch and a cane grinder. Instead of a mule, he uses a lawn mower to turn the grinder arm!

When Jim wants to bud he applies calcium nitrate a week before to induce a growth flush.

I look forward to taste testing the Muscadine grapes this summer. I had wondered how to check out all the interesting cultivars in Ison's catalog - now I can do it here! In my report on grapes I'll spend time with Fay to observe her floral plantings around the house. The soul must be satisfied as well as the belly!

It's great to visit a unique Florida fruit farm. Thanks again, Jim, for your citrus donations for the Citrus Celebration and thanks so very much for sharing so much of your time, expertise and great conversation.

Jim still has a lot of interesting fruit to taste and sell, and don't forget his extensive variety planting of muscadines this summer: J.L. Gassett, U.S. Hwy 17-S, Bartow FL 33830, 863-533-6888, Jgassett@juno.com



**BOARD MEMBERS**

- |                   |                                |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Charles Novak  | 10. Art Hedstrand              |
| 2. Bob Heath      | 11. Pat Jean                   |
| 3. Sally Lee      | 12. Al Jean                    |
| 4. Jim Lee        | 13. Sal Russo                  |
| 5. Linda Novak    | 14. Paul Branesky              |
| 6. Gerald Amyot   | 15. Janet Conard               |
| 7. Lillian Stark  | 16. Beth Reddicliffe-alternate |
| 8. Arnold Stark   | 17. Pat McGauley-alternate     |
| 9. Susan McAveety |                                |

**OFFICERS & CHAIRS**

President: Bob Heath  
 Vice President: Sally Lee  
 Vice President: Jim Lee  
 Vice President: Gerald Amyot  
 Vice President: Charles Novak  
 Secretary: Linda Nopak  
 Treasurer: Susan McAveety  
 Librarian: Sal Russo  
 Program Chairman: Jim Lee

**WHAT'S HAPPENING**

Mar-Apr 2000

by Paul Zmoda

It's not Spring just yet as I write this, but it sure feels like it. Lots of trees are blooming and I expect lots of fruit this year. Our new flatwoods, chिकासaw and gulfgold plums are flowering for the first time. All the citrus have buds; the Surinam cherries are laden with new buds. The Texas Black persimmon is all buds - and no leaves yet! Will this be the year it sets something? We'll see. The Chinese che is showing some of these odd, spherical buds. It is said to produce seedless fruit without a male pollinator. I am looking forward to that. Strawberries are setting lots of fruit.

One of the seedling loquats from Israel is in trouble: it hasn't grown well lately and I've discovered why. The root system is failing. It would fall over if not for being tied upright. It's companion "sisters" are rooted strongly so I think it is a genetic weakness. To save it I have grafted the top scions to some vigorous seedlings generously provided by Charles Novak. I've also grafted a few cherimoyas (a seven-year-old very cold-hardy seedling that is at my old place). It probably is too large to move, so this is how I can have my fruit and eat it too! I have budded a Chironja citrus as well as a hard-to-find sunquat (more on this little gem in a later issue) for an expert rare fruit grower in Pennsylvania.

I believe carambolas are better off growing on their own roots rather than being grafted. Here's why: should the tree get broken off by accident (this happened to one of my trees) or be severely frozen to the ground (not unheard of around here), it will still sprout true to type. Carambolas, or star fruit, are strong trees. They're very determined to push forth after suffering hardships. So I prefer cutting-grown or air layered specimens. I made a bunch of air layers on a very nice quality seedling tree which used to be a root stock of the 'Fwang tung' variety. This tree is loaded with delicious fruit much better than any other I've sampled. 'Fwang tung' is boring compared to this one that I've named 'Sunrise'. I also made an air layer of a macadamia nut tree. I then potted up a slew of red sugar apple seedlings as well as seedlings of the "giant" jaboticaba.

All fruit trees have now been fertilized with the exception of figs, muscadine grapes and persimmons. Figs don't really need much fertilizer, the grapes require a balanced fertilizer such as 8-8-8 in April, or as growth resumes, and persimmons can use high nitrogen fertilizer such as for lawns, but in small amounts.

You should put up bird nest boxes at this time. Build them of scrap plywood and place them on trees, poles and buildings. We have owl, woodpecker, flycatcher and bluebird houses placed around the farm. Most are used during the year by birds, although flying squirrels inhabit two boxes now. If you need plans to build bird houses, please contact me.

New plantings: papayas, Ilama, carambola, tea, sorghum and tangelo.

## Message from the President

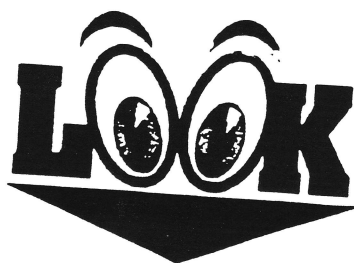
The time has come for changing of the guard - the old must step aside and make way for the new. At this time we must see our longest reigning president step down. Many of our members have known no other president but Charles Novak. It seems unlikely that I can fill the shoes of the man I replace but for the next year I will take up the banner and attempt to lead the Club as well as my predecessor. With out last election we have chosen four vice presidents to assist me. With this much help perhaps I can perform reasonably well.

I myself, and I am sure, all of our members, cannot thank Charles enough for the leadership he has provided and the effort he has committed to our Club. With the help of Charles and the other vice presidents, I, for one, look forward to a successful year. Also I wish to ask the assistance of all the other members of our Club to provide assistance at our Tree Sales and at the Citrus Celebration. Also we need suggestions for speakers to add interest and information at our meetings. We need donations of fruiting plants for our raffle and tasty goodies for our tasting table at the meetings, and we need help on the Newsletter, which I will continue to be involved with. With this kind of help my term has got to be a success.

The Spring Plant Festival at U.S.F. will serve as a substitute for our April meeting on the 8th & 9th. Anyone who needs a pass to work at the Tree Sale may contact me; I have a few left.

The following is a list of scheduled programs/speakers:

- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| April 8 & 9 | U.S.F. Plant Festival                           |
| May 14      | Gene Joyner with a look at his fabulous gardens |
| June 11     | Fred Strickland speaking on blueberry culture   |
| July 9      | Ray Jones of the Sarasota RFCI                  |



## Manatee RFCI Annual Tree Sale

The Manatee RFCI Tree Sale is scheduled for Sunday, May 21, 2000 at the Manatee Convention Center in Palmetto, FL. For additional information contact Pete Ray @ 1-941-776-0222.



### AN INTERESTING PROJECT

We have received a letter from Larry Shatzer, owner of Our Kids Tropicals, Nursery and Landscape in Winter Garden. Larry has been growing tropical fruit trees and other exotics for over 25 years. He founded the Tropical Fruit Club of Central Florida in 1991 and served as president for several years. The reason for his letter is to inform us that he has recently become part owner, in partnership with Sherry Shatzer and John Antony, of a unique and one-of-a-kind tropical fruit collection consisting of 3 acres on Big Pine Key. It is the Adolph Grimal Estate. Mr. Grimal spent over 40 years building his collection and a good portion of his life savings bringing good soil from the mainland, and designing and digging 2 large cisterns and 4 ponds to catch and hold water to be used to irrigate his rare trees and plants. John Antony, a friend of Larry's, purchased the property with their intention of restoring it in honor of Adolph Grimal to the beautiful gardens it once was. They have been working since the summer of 1998 restoring and cleaning up the property. They are planning a final "clean-up party" on May 13 & 14 and have invited anyone interested in coming down to join the efforts and social contacts to finalize the restoration before opening the gardens to the public.

Provisions will be made at the property for workers to camp or a list of motels and resorts will be available. There will be a big cookout on Saturday night and of course, an opportunity to view a significant tropical fruit tree collection, a beautiful place with a significant position in the tropical fruit world. Larry and others will be there from the 11th to the 14th for those who would like to come early. They are also looking for donations of rare exotic fruit trees and other exotic plants to add to the collection. Name tags on the trees will also include the donor's name. Donations of fertilizer and nutrients are also welcome.

For additional information concerning this wonderful effort, please call 407-877-6883 or e-mail at [Ourkidstro@aol.com](mailto:Ourkidstro@aol.com) or call Bob Heath at 289-1068 or Charles Novak at 745-1399.

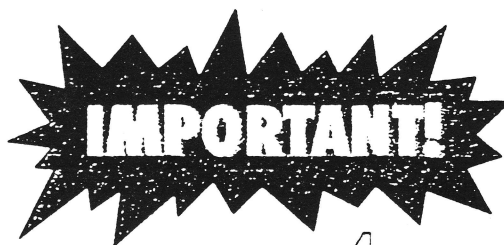
Unfortunately, May 14 is our meeting Sunday at USF so some of us will not be available.

### EUREKA SPRINGS PARK

Those who failed to attend our March meeting at Eureka Springs Park missed an interesting and educational program. As always at our covered dish socials, the food was excellent and more than enough to satiate everyone. Also, Eureka Springs Park is a unique natural area located as it is in an extensive swamp. A network of well built boardwalks travels throughout the wooded areas. Today there is virtually no water but we are told that during the rainy season when the swamp fills, it is even more exciting (I'm sure much of the excitement comes from warding off mosquitos). Over 7 varieties of fruiting plants were discovered throughout the native plants and landscape planting. The meeting room where we met is screened, clean and well appointed for our kind of meeting. Most of our members took the opportunity of walking across the street to tour the Starks' plantings at their home, which is pretty extensive.

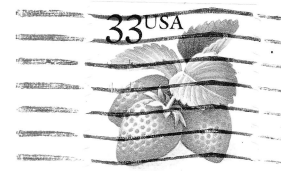
The park is open daily until 5:00 for anyone wishing to visit. The map in the March newsletter offers directions to the park.





Your annual membership dues are due in March. If there is a RED mark on your mailing label, please send \$18.00 to the club mailing address, 313 Pruett Road, Seffner, FL 33584.

RFCI Tampa Bay Chapter  
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*First Class Mail*



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