



NEWSLETTER

MAY 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 p.m.

NEXT MEETING: MAY 14

MEETING PLACE: UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA, Building #BSF100

PROGRAM: THIS MONTH, AS USUAL ON MOTHERS DAY, OUR SPEAKER WILL BE OUR GOOD FRIEND FROM PALM BEACH COUNTY EXTENSION SERVICE, GENE JOYNER. Gene's visits to our meetings are always enjoyed by our members, as he is a knowledgeable authority on tropical fruiting trees. He will be providing a slide presentation of the 2.5 acres he is adding to his gardens. He will also have a presentation on diseases and pests of tropical trees. Also, he will be available to answer questions and to identify plants if you have questions that need answers or plants that need identifying. We will have our usual tasting table and plant raffle. Please contribute. This should be an exceptionally interesting meeting so we expect to see a large crowd. We know it is Mothers Day and we suggest that members bring their mothers.

* * * THANK YOU THANK YOU THANK YOU * * *

Many thanks to all our members who worked at the U.S.F. Plant Festival & Sale in April.

NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT....

I would like to personally thank all club members who helped at the Spring USF Plant Festival. The weather was great but really chilly on Sunday morning. Saturday was cloudy and threatened rain but held off at the University, although we had rain in other areas. We got several new members whom I hope will be able to join us at the May meeting. Gene Joyner always gives a very interesting and informative program and this meeting should be no exception.

Our membership is not taking advantage of the Members Corner in the newsletter. If you have something to sell or trade, or would like to buy something, please submit the information to Bob Heath by mail or in person.

The date of our July meeting will be changed from the 9th to the 16th. This change will allow us to accommodate a trip to Homestead, FL for the annual Mango Festival and the Fruit & Spice Park Exposition, which is scheduled for July 7, 8 & 9. Many of our members are making plans to attend this affair, which is certainly one of the most interesting and exciting events of the year. Additional information will be forthcoming in the June & July newsletters.

Following is a list of scheduled programs/speakers:

May 14 - Gene Joyner

June 11 - Fred Strickland speaking on blueberry culture

July 16 - Ray Jones of the Sarasota RFCI

Please bring plants for the raffle and your favorite fruit dish for the tasting table.

There will be a board meeting after the club meeting.

A VISIT WITH DOTTIE AND AL EBANKS

by Art Hedstrand

Dottie and Al have a 10 acre U-pick farm on MacIntosh Road in east Hillsborough County; another 10 acres in back is leased to a neighbor for cattle grazing. Over 30+ years they have established a 'family' of about 1000 customers, so no advertising is necessary.

I went there initially to taste test loquats (they and mulberries are my present interest in tasting). You have to taste varieties to determine which flavors suit you, and then propagate or acquire accordingly.

Al took me in his golf cart first to a loquat seedling from Italy. It's flavor is pretty good, but the plus is it's size: equal to or bigger than Oliver. Some fruits are seedless as well! Upon reflection, I wonder if the size is in part attributable to a small amount of fruit per cluster (George Riegler had observed that, with the seedling from overseas that Johnny Montano gave him - first flowering this year). This might be a characteristic of some varieties - a very useful property. An article in "Fruit Gardener" (California Rare Fruit Growers) about 3 years ago showed how a grower thinned loquat fruit clusters and also bagged each fruit to obtain very large size blemish-free fruit. The typical loquat sets a large number of fruit per cluster and a large number of clusters per tree, resulting in small to medium to large fruit, according to the variety. Some of the small yellow-skinned varieties are very sweet and of excellent flavor despite their small size. In general, only sweetness with no acid content makes a boring flavor which turns one off fairly quickly (this was discussed during citrus taste testing with George Riegler in a previous newsletter).

Our next stop was a long hedgerow of loquats running south of the house along the road, all at the end of their season. Of these, only one stood out - Sally Lee's favorite, a sweet variety. Some of this variety and others in the row had seedless fruit in a pretty fair portion of the ones tasted. This property alone is not enough to recommend it: it must have good flavor.

Next Al showed me around his plantings: he's planting more loquats north of the house along the road as with the row to the south, to shield his persimmons here from the road and non-paying grazers. Just inside is a row of feijoas, then a large planting of Oriental persimmons (*Diospyros kaki*) and a considerable number of large rootstocks (*D. virginiana*) where the kaki grafts died off. This is a trait of *D. kaki* - they do not attain the 600 year life reported in Japan. I know of only 2 trees that attained 50 year life; one is gone, I haven't checked the other one in Sumter County. The large *D. virginiana* rootstocks could be top worked over to *D. kaki*.

The majority of the kaki planting is Saijo, Fuyugaki, Tanenashi and Tamopan. The birds love Matsumotowasefuyu (early Fuyu) which turns real red, so Dottie and Al don't get to enjoy it.

There are smaller trees of Izu and Great Wall. The potted trees from Wauchula don't seem to come along very well, as contrasted with Lou Louder's bare root trees from Trenton. Mr. Persimmon, Jim Mercer, wrote in a couple of places including the Persimmons Growers Newsletter, that kaki grown in pots were not as good as bare root trees.

Dottie was going to Leesburg to acquire an 8-12-16 fertilizer with trace elements, recommended by the persimmon growers group. This is probably the fertilizer Jim Mercer developed.

There was a tremendous amount of root sprouting around many of the kaki. It would be a worthwhile endeavor to determine which *D. virginiana* varieties do not sprout so much.

The middle area east of the house is a large planting of muscadine grapes: over 49 varieties! They have all of Ison Nurseries cultivars, having just added Rosa, Scarlet, Early Fry and Janet (the latter two are not new cultivars). The two bunch grapes, Blue Lake and Lake Emerald are not popular (I like Blue Lake). Black Fry is less seedy than some other muscadines and is a good seller, as is regular Fry. Ripening times for the bunch grapes is beginning of July; muscadines in August.

In the southeast area are newer plantings of peaches and nectarines. Al has been searching for Flordabelle peach trees, a fine freestone cultivar which evidently is hard to find: does anyone know sources? He has other of the 'Florda-' series from Gainesville, as well as Tropic Sweet. Fruiting time is May, as with plums of which he has Gulf Gold, a good performer for the Ebanks.

Next is a long row of various guava varieties, which froze back to the ground in our early freeze. Lots of pruning necessary with these critters! Dottie has a few blueberries scattered throughout this area.

There's a small patch of oak woods with a tall Brogden avocado on each side. Further west is a banana patch of various cultivars. Next is a large planting of assorted citrus cultivars, including Dottie's favorite: Ponkan, white and red navels, Honey murcott, grapefruit and two Hirado Buntan pommelos. A row of Asian pears about 6-7 feet tall hasn't done anything yet.

Rounding out the southwest area is a planting of plums and old peach cultivars including their favorite Flordabelle. Several of these are exhibiting dieback, and I noted gum exudate on the trunks, indicating peach borer infestation. I doubt there's any successful control for this: peaches typically have a relatively short life in Florida (with George Riegler's notable exceptions of 35 years!). I guess it would be best to plant new peach trees every 5 years or so to keep the line going. That brings us up to the loquat row along the road south of the house, so back to the house!

There's an old small-fruited tangerine seedling (probably Dancy) at the south end of the house, shielding a large Brogden avocado close to the house. This tree is nicely branched out down low, facilitating harvest. It has a good fruit set of a few fruit per cluster. (If avocados set all of their flowers, the tree would fall apart from the load and they would only be ping pong ball size!)

There's a pleasant gentle slope to the east starting at the house and overlooking the muscadine planting. Dottie has a small pretty lily pond with goldfish, lavender lilies and floating lettuce. The eye catcher, though, is a huge *Opuntia* cactus just loaded with flower buds. It's about 6 feet tall, but sprawls over about 10-12 feet diameter. The lavender fruit are slightly acid, but okay in their overripe stage - they had fallen from the plant. There's also a yellow skinned fruit 'Tuna' cactus, *Opuntia ficus-indica*, one of my favorite fruits.

East of the cacti are two small che plants (male and female), with fruit on them at about 18 inches tall! (Maybe the 2-10-10 fertilizer helped?) They came from Edible Landscaping in Virginia and are rather pricey.

There are a few pears, probably Flordahome and Pineapple, all hard pear fruit. Northeast of the house between persimmons and muscadines are a huge Texas everbearing fig and then several Chinese chestnut trees, which Al and Dottie love.

This farm has concentrated on fruit varieties that do well in this area, with a selection of varieties to serve customers much of the year. Thanks very much, Dottie and Al, for the great visit (I can't get over that outstanding *Opuntia* cactus!).

WHAT'S HAPPENING

Apr-May 2000

by PAUL ZMODA

Springtime is a very busy time of year for us. We are actively planting seeds and trees, making new cuttings and potting rooted cuttings and young seedlings of all sorts. When making air layers, it is important that they don't dry out. I keep them hydrated as needed by injecting water through the wraps with a hypodermic needle.

Ilamas, sugar apples, soursops and Eugenias are budding nicely at this time. A dozen yellow mombin fruits are growing larger. I have de-fruited most of our young citrus trees to some extent by now to direct the growth toward tree size and shape.

Our wheat crop is fully mature and harvested - dried to a golden tan color. Now what shall we do with it? It's a wonder to see how much only 25 seeds have yielded. I estimated 4400 seeds! If all these are planted next year, we might expect 809,600 kernels of wheat to harvest.

New plantings: Avocados, warpee, palms, tower tree, black sapote, giant duhat (Java plum), more pawpaws.

U S F SPRING PLANT FESTIVAL

The Board would like to thank all club members who contributed their valuable time and effort to the USF Spring Plant Festival. The weather was perfect on Saturday (maybe a little on the warm side); and there was a very good turnout of avid gardeners looking for fruiting trees, shrubs and vines. There was some concern that the lack of rain, very dry conditions and watering restrictions would discourage some people from planting new flowers, trees, etc., but that did not seem to be the case. We always have a lot of interest from the public as everyone likes some varieties of fruits and would like to grow their favorites. The display of fruit also attracts a lot of interest. Our offering of fruit juices for sale seems to be popular with both vendors and shoppers. The first day we sold over 12 gallons of fruit juices by 12:15 pm. Sunday started out on the COLD side but warmed up nicely; and we had a steady stream of people looking for fruiting trees. We would like to extend a warm welcome to our new members who joined us at the USF Sale. We hope to see you soon at our meetings.

RARE FRUIT CONFERENCE

Chris Rollins, Director of the Fruit & Spice Park in Homestead FL, is producing another annual "Rare Fruit Conference" July 7-9. All clubs are invited to attend. Past conferences have included meeting other enthusiastic and knowledgeable tropical fruit growers, field trips, seminars, mango tasting at Fairchild Gardens (fresh fruit & food dishes prepared with mango), a tour of the Kampong (extensive fruit tree planting at the Fairchild home) and a tour of the Fruit & Spice Park (and a delicious meal). The keynote speaker this year will be Dr Roberto E Coronel of the Institute of Plant Breeding, University of the Philippines. The registration fee is \$35.00 for members. A program for the conference will be released in June. Several members from our club are planning to attend the conference so please plan to join us. There will be more information in the June newsletter.

TOPWORKING PERSIMMONS

Art Hedstrand

Large (5-6" in diameter) *Diospyros virginiana* rootstocks may be topworked over to *D. kaki*. It is not wise to hatrack the tree and graft individual branches, as might be done on apple trees up north. Persimmons are naturally self pruning and eventually the lower branches might slough off; there goes your precious graft! It is best to cut the tree off at 2' to 4' height.

Three grafting methods come to mind: cleft grafting, grafting/budding of sprouts from sawed off rootstock, bark grafting.

I prefer to cut the stock off at an angle rather than horizontally. With this method, healing of the stump is better, with less tendency to develop a rotten spot in the center due to poor rain drainage. Admittedly this is more difficult. An alternate is to set two scions in cleft grafts. However it is hard to discipline yourself to top one scion later and train it into a branch. Or you might allow the two scions to grow together, thus eliminating the cleft. Despite the dreaded narrow crotch, trees so produced have survived hurricanes without splitting.

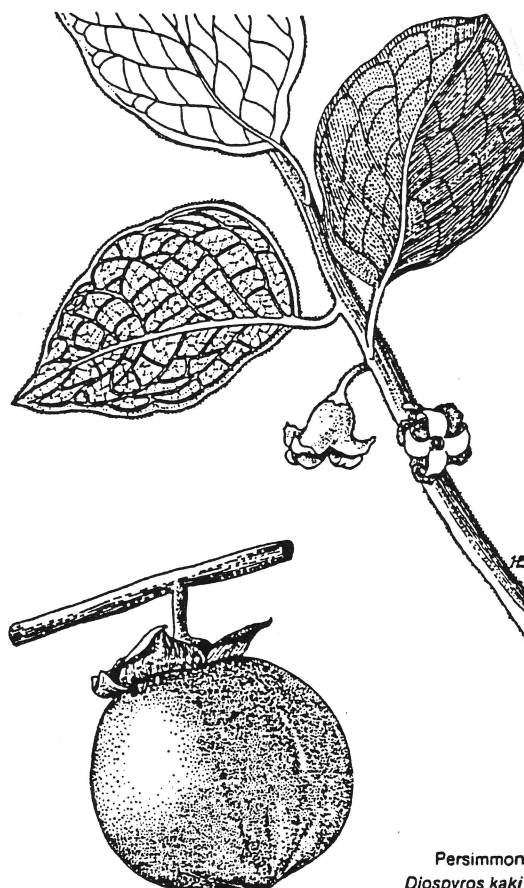
Use masking tape to seal the stump and apply pressure to hold scions in place.

To cleft graft, you need a long blade like a machete to split the stock and a wooden piece of log to hammer it down across the diameter. It is wise to mark the stump first, then use a knife vertically to cut through the bark at each end of the cleft. This gives a clean straight cut against which to place the scion's cambium layer opposite the rootstock cambium layer. The cambium layer is the interface between bark and hard wood where growth takes place. Unfortunately, persimmon rootstock often will split in a twisted fashion.

Use a large wooden wedge or chisel to hold the split open while inserting the two scions with their cambium layer aligned with the rootstock cambium layer. Large stumps will have heavy clamping pressure. Just seal the open areas with masking tape or grafting wax. Seal the top ends of the scions and tie in place. A Kraft paper bag over the scions and stump will reduce evaporation. Remove the bag when the scions sprout.

To graft sprouts, cut off the tree at 2' - 4' height, straight across or angled as preferred. Allow the stump to sprout. After the sprouts have matured, turning from green to a brownish hue, you may either graft or bud to the sprouts.

To bark graft, cut off the stock and prepare as with cleft grafting. At intervals of about 3 to 4" around the circumference you may insert scions. Use a sharp blade in vertical position to cut through bark, then lightly pry the bark open along the



Persimmon
Diospyros kaki

Topworking Persimmons, continued...

cut to allow the scions to be inserted. In this method the scion is trimmed in a taper on one side only, that side being placed against the cambium on the stump. After the scions are in place, bind around the circumference with masking tape to apply pressure to hold scions in place and to exclude air and moisture. Cover the cut top of the stock to seal it. Apply paper bag.

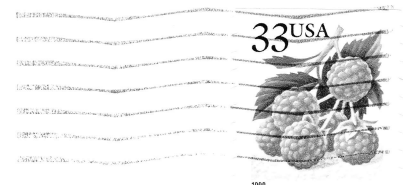
A caution with bark graftin: you must provide support for the scions after they sprout. A strong wind could blow them out. Tie a stake to the stump at each scion and the scions to stakes. It will take a year or two for scions to become self supporting. The scion may grow several feet in height the first season. It is wise to pinch off the growing tip while it is in a growth mode and a few feet high. This will encourage branching.

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What is purple and conquered the known world?

Alexander the grape concord the known world.

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