



NEWSLETTER

JUNE 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 AT 2:00 p.m.

NEXT MEETING: JULY 16

MEETING PLACE: UNIVERSITY OF SO. FLORIDA, BLDG. #BSF 100

PROGRAM: OUR SPEAKER THIS MONTH WILL BE FRED STICKLAND, THE BLUEBERRY GROWER WHO PROVIDES BLUEBERRIES AT OUR TREE SALE. Strangely enough, he will be speaking on blueberry culture. Blueberries are easy to grow but only if one follows a few very important rules. Fred will show us how, so come to the meeting, enjoy his presentation and you may soon be enjoying your own blueberry pie. As usual, we will have our raffle and fabulous tasting table. After the meeting, there will be a board meeting; all members are invited to listen in.

WHAT'S HAPPENING

May-June 2000

by PAUL ZMODA

I was excited to discover recently that our 'Dunstan' chestnuts have both produced flowers. I estimate their ages to be about seven years from seed. Whether we see any chestnuts this year remains to be seen. I've found that many fruit trees fail to hold their fruits the first few seasons. Still, you can't have fruit without flowers; we are halfway there.

Our 'Meader' persimmon has set some fruit for the first time also, as has 'Izu' (a Japanese persimmon).

Recently I obtained some pummelo budwood from a Vietnamese grower. He says it's the best yellow "cone-shaped" one he knows of. Some of my own pummelo trees are now big enough to be top-worked, so I budded it onto two trees.

Our oldest soursop has been flowering steadily since the Fall of 1999. No fruit yet, although I am optimistic as always, and pollinating often.

Some tropical guavas are setting fruit now; other ones are still dying back from that one brief freeze we had. I may move them to a more sheltered location.

Our 'Tropic Beauty' peaches are ripening and coloring up nicely. They are juicy, sweet and delicious - I highly recommend this variety.

It has been said that paw paws (Asimina spp.) transplant best when leafing out, not when dormant. I have found this to be true.

New plantings: Bearss lime, dill, okra, New Zealand spinach, true bay tree, redberry stopper and cassava.

MAY PLANT RAFFLE

PLANT	DONOR	WINNER
Passion Fruit	Heath	Shane Smith
Praying Hands	"	Buster Keaton
Rio Grande Cherry	"	Sal Russo
Eugenia Confusa	"	Sal Russo
Surinam Cherry	"	?
Nopale's Cactus	"	Buster Keaton
Pond Apple	Janet Conard	J. Cimafranca
Key Lime Seedling	"	Marv Hymes
Orinoco Banana (2)	Lee	?
Grape Tomatoes	"	?
Roselle	"	T. Scott
Roselle	"	Pat McGauley
Papaya	"	Maryse Lawson
Banana	Paul Branesky	Buster Keaton
Java Plum	"	Shane Smith
Star Apple	"	Maryse Lawson
Crown Hat (2)	"	Heath
Blueberry Jam	Novak	Jerry Amyot
Cracker Rose	Stark	?
Blueberry Plant	Charles Novak	Ed Musgrave
Blueberry Plant	"	Jim Murrie
Blueberry Plant	"	Virginia Male
Blueberry Plant	"	Alan Male
Palm	Ricky Maseda	?
Banana	Susan McAveety	Buster Keaton
Papaya Fruit	Weekley	Sherman Dorn
Guava	Pat McGauley	?
Casava	"	Virginia Male
Namwa Banana (2)	Sharon Pilot	Stark
Namwa Banana	"	Pat McGauley
Plumeria (2)		Shane Smith
Wisteria	J. Cimafranca	Pat Jean
Banana (2)	?	Robert Owens
Cherry	?	Marv Hymes
Papaya	?	Wanda Foley
Coconut	?	James Lee

Tropical Fruit News

The following letter was received on May 1 from Gary Mehalik. This is a program which we believe our members should support. Story ideas or articles which members believe would be of interest may be sent to Gary as he suggests.

Tampa Bay Rare Fruit Council
313 Pruett Rd.
Seffner, FL 33584

Dear Sirs:

Allow me to introduce myself as the new editor of *Tropical Fruit News*. I am an experienced journalist with a strong commitment to developing this well-respected publication into an even more interesting and credible source of information about pomology.

I am writing to ask your assistance in developing content for future issues of *Tropical Fruit News*. We are soliciting articles about tropical fruit in South Florida and also interested in publicizing the events your group is sponsoring. In order to increase participation and membership, we will be telling people about events before they happen. Then, they will be reported in a top notch way, just as you would expect to see events covered in a magazine you buy on the newsstand.

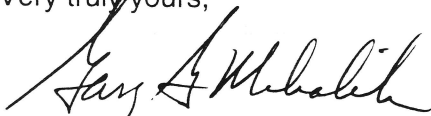
If you have a particular area of interest, or know of an expert in an area that needs to be covered, please take this opportunity to let us know about it. As we widen the scope of the magazine's coverage and open it up to increasing numbers of readers, we will develop regular features in the magazine, as well as specialty articles. Now is the time to suggest the content you want to see in the magazine, and for you to contribute to what will surely be the world's foremost publication regarding rare and tropical fruits.

In addition, watch for our new web site <http://www.tropicalfruit.org> going on line in May. It will contain excerpts from the magazine as well as news about upcoming events. If you would like your event publicized, please send us information about it at least three months in advance so it can appear in both the magazine and on the web site.

Send notices, story ideas, or articles by FAX, mail, or e-mail. It helps to receive them before the 15th of the month. You may phone/FAX to (305) 447-9805 or you might find it easier to contact me by e-mail at **GMehalik@aol.com**. I can open file attachments in Word, WordPerfect and Rich Text Format, as well as plain ASCII text. If you're the kind of person who prefers a typewriter to a computer, you can send mail to P.O. Box 144332, Coral Gables, FL 33114-4332.

While relatively new to the world of tropical pomology, I have the full support of The Rare Fruit Council International and twenty years experience as an award-winning journalist to contribute to this effort. I am excited, enthusiastic, and optimistic about the impact we will soon be making in this field. I look forward to your support, notifications of events, and article contributions.

Very truly yours,



Gary G. Mehalik
Editor

P.O. Box 144332, Coral Gables FL 33114-4332

DISEASES AND PESTS OF TROPICAL FRUIT

by GENE JOYNER

Die-back appears to be a genetic problem in Cherry of the Rio Grande and other related trees. It seems to attack individual branches at random. The leaves will wilt and turn brown and the branch will die. This doesn't usually affect the entire tree and the only thing one can do is cut off the dead branches. It has never been determined just what causes this die-back but it seems to be a trait of certain trees.

Fire blight is a disease that acts similar to dieback on loquats, apples, pears and relatives. It's very strange because one branch may be affected while the rest of the tree remains perfectly healthy. You never know where it's going to show up or what part of the tree is going to be affected. When it appears on a limb, the only thing you can do is cut out the affected area at a point which seems to be well below the dying wood. One should also disinfect the pruners with bleach or alcohol between cuts so as not to spread the virus. It normally doesn't affect trees that are not in flower because the disease seems to be spread by pollinating insects. Likewise, there is no known spray that can be used to cure fire blight. The infected limbs should be burned or sent to the city incinerator.

There are also bacteria that cause galls, much like cancer in humans. Usually galls will not kill the tree depending upon the type of bacteria infection. Gene had some slides of galls up to 8" in diameter, but in no case did they seem to be affecting the productivity of the branches. However, there are galls that will destroy the limb out beyond where it's located. When a limb dies, you must trim that part of the tree away, including the gall, similar as with die-back.

Gene had a slide of a virus on papaya which causes mottling and yellowing and eventually causes the tree to decline and die. He also showed us a slide of the disease on the fruit. As

the foliage begins to die, the fruit will not progress any further. He also showed us another virus that affects the fruit. It's called papaya ring spot virus. It is a very common virus on papayas and once the tree becomes infected, it very rapidly declines and dies. It is spread by insects so if you have a tree that shows this virus infection, you should get that tree out of the landscape as soon as possible to avoid infecting other healthy trees. A fruit on the tree, if it appears healthy, is safe to eat. The virus does not affect humans so if the fruit still appears in good shape, it's safe.

Another problem with papayas is the papaya fruit fly. The female lays her eggs inside the fruit in the seed cavity so when you open it up, it will be full of little maggots. If you have the papaya fruit fly in your area, the only way to protect the fruit is to bag it, which needs to be done when the fruit is very small because the fly will attack the fruit at that stage because the fly has to deposit her eggs inside the cavity. If the flesh is too thick, she will not be able to reach the cavity to lay her eggs. You can bag the fruit with plastic bags loosely so the fruit can grow and punch a small hole in the bottom so any moisture that collects can drain out. The fruit fly is killed off by a cold winter such as we had about 4 or 5 years ago, but will return to the area as mild winters follow. However, I do not believe they are in the Tampa area at this time.

Next, Gene showed us some slides of white sapotes which are subjected to a leaf spot disease that causes little brown polka dots all over the leaves. It's not life threatening to the trees but it certainly detracts from the landscape beauty of an otherwise beautiful tree. There are no chemicals available at this time to control this leaf spot disease. White sapotes are also subject to splitting when the rainy season starts after a dry spell. It's caused by a rapid growth of the fruit without a corresponding growth of the

skin. It may be necessary to pick the fruit a little earlier and let it ripen off the tree to avoid splitting.

Leaf rust on figs is a disease that occurs late in the year during the rainy season. It can be managed somewhat with a copper spray but not be completely controlled. It begins on the older leaves, the edges of which begin to turn brown and spreads to younger leaves. The leaves will curl up and turn brown and fall off and when you lose leaves, you lose the food manufacturing capabilities. If you have a fig tree that's just a stick with figs on it and only a couple of leaves, the fruit will not develop very well or be very sweet.

The strawberry tree or Muntingia is another one that gets the leaf spot disease during summer rains. It mainly attacks older leaves; they get black spots on them & drop off rather quickly. There is no chemical cleared for use on this disease, but the muntingia is such a rapid grower that it pretty well keeps ahead of the disease.

The grumichama is another plant that gets the die-back disease similar to the cherry of the Rio Grande. It is peculiar to this group of plants. No one has ever identified what the exact cause is so they haven't come up with a common cure. The grumichama is also subject to a leaf spot disease. It likewise attacks the older leaves and not the young ones. The older leaves get rusty spots on them, turn yellow and leave you with an almost naked plant within a few weeks. Cooper has been used for this and seems to do some good but it's not legally authorized for leaf spot on grumichamas.

Gene showed us some slides of anonas attacked by anona seed borers. The fruit had a series of small holes about the size of a toothpick lined up on one side of the fruit. The initial infection takes place when the fruit is no bigger than a marble. The adult lays eggs in the fruit. The larvae develop along with the fruit and when the fruit reaches maturity they bore from the inside out and of course with the small holes, disease can get into the fruit and cause rapid decay. There is no known cure or chemical presently provided for this problem. This insect first showed up in Dade County and is now moving north into other areas.

There are also some algae that cause problems in fruit. The slide showed a red algae. In the summer time when the fruit is ripening, the algae appears. Lychees, longans, white sapotes, black sapotes, mamay sapotes, guavas, mangoes, avocados, a lot of different fruit are subject to this algae. Fortunately, it's easy to control. One spraying with a copper fungicide will take care of it. If you leave it alone, don't do anything, it eventually will girdle the branch and cause the death of the branch. On big limbs where it can't encircle the whole limb, it doesn't present a big threat. In June & July when the rain is coming in, is when you normally see this fungus. So watch your plants in June & July and if you see this red fungus, spray it with copper and get rid of it.

There are a lot of insects that are a major headache. The slide showed a fruiting loquat and Gene reminded us that some years we get almost no fruit because of the Caribbean fruit fly. It was introduced into Florida in 1965 and has spread throughout much of the state. There are over 100 fruits & vegetables that are host for it. Almost any tropical fruit you can think of, under certain conditions, will be a host for the Caribbean fruit fly. They do have preferences, guavas, loquats, Surinam cherries, but if these are not available, almost anything will do. The only control is to bag the fruit, which is practical for large fruit but out of the question for small fruit like Surinam cherries. In areas that were sprayed for the Mediterranean fruit fly, the Caribbean fruit fly also was decimated.

Gene showed us a problem with avocados. The leaves look almost like they've been sunburned, but the damage is actually caused by a small sucking insect. On the underside of the leaf you will see the little black insects, lace bugs. They are smaller than 1/16" but large enough to be seen. Their feeding causes a brown spot on the upper surface of the leaf. With a heavy infestation, when enough damage is done, the leaves turn brown and fall off the tree. With the West Indian avocado, spraying is really not necessary because the avocado naturally drops all its leaves in the early spring. So the tree takes care of the problem itself. With the cold hardy avocados that do not drop leaves, malathion spray is approved and does a very good job of correcting the problem.

BEMIS' S GARDEN

by Art Hedstrand

Dear friend and mentor to many of us, Bemis Gordon had a stroke about April 2 and is in a nursing home getting physical and speech therapy. Doctor says he will be well again. Three Jamaican gentlemen were at Bemis's Sat., May 20, gathering yams "in the bush", which Bemis saves for them. The next day after church they visited Bemis and Fay said he had a grin from ear to ear all the time they were there! One had a severe stroke years ago in Jamaica and had completely recovered, so that was welcome news for Bemis.

Bemis has a 40 acre place on a west sloping hillside in East Hernando County. This is within that cornucopia-shaped area stretching from Brooksville to Dade City that has a unique soil for Florida - reddish brown and rich. Originally much of his parcel was orange grove which perished in the '80's freezes.

Bemis came over to this area from South Merritt Island where the state took his nursery for the Pineda Causeway, thus going from tropical plant culture to subtropical or almost northern.

Bemis had (or has?) agreements from several plant stations to automatically send him new plant materials, so he grafted or budded innumerable varieties of pears, apples, plums, etc. Needless to say, much of these cultivars do not do well in Florida.

Presently Bemis's interest is daylilies. About 2 years ago he said he had resumed hybridizing after a 26 year hiatus! His prior interest was antique roses. Much of the property has reverted to forest - oaks, black cherries mostly. There is a jungle of fruit trees invaded in various areas by blackberries, some stink vine and bamboo - both timber and a spreading type, both of which can leap long distances with their root suckers. Bemis has placed hundreds of rolls of carpeting around his plantings to reduce weed invasion but alas, bamboo and blackberries don't believe in it.

The plantings include some of just about everything in fruits: topa topa avocado, 'hardy' citrus, apples, pears, figs, persimmons, muscadines, chestnuts, mayhaws, kiwis, pomegranates, quince, peaches, mulberries etc.

A lot of big trees are in pots with roots into the ground - evidently he didn't get to set them all out.

This is a very difficult place to explore because of the blackberry vines - you must inch along with a swing blade. Lots of plant labels are missing.

Bemis told my son Allan in March that only the daylilies are important; he was too old to graft persimmons - wouldn't live to see any crops. (He had chainsawed off many big wild persimmons 2 years ago in preparation for grafting but never got to it.)

Right now I have to get back over to Bemis's to water daylilies. Those in one gallon black pots are particularly susceptible to cooking in the sun - fortunately their rhizomes afford some survival protection. But watering is endless!

Fay requests that no one come to visit Bemis's plantings - she is not knowledgeable about them and doesn't have time. She was overjoyed that the Jamaicans visited Bemis and encourages friends dropping in to see him or sending him a card/letter, which she reads to him. He cannot speak at present but he and Fay can communicate. Fay is at 352-796-8393; 27410 Old Trilby Road, Brooksville, FL 34602. Bemis is in a nursing home on Hwy 50 (Cortez Blvd) in the Springhill area west of Brooksville (call Fay for info).

Oh yes, Bemis is 84 and his birthday is in August.

TROPICAL FRUIT WEEKEND

00-41

RARE FRUIT CLUB CONFERENCE

The following letter was received from Chris Rollins. This weekend in July will provide us with a mountain of interesting information and promises to be a great social event. As many as possible of our membership should attend. The registration form is printed below; cut it out or copy it and mail to Chris Rollins with your check for \$35.00. In conjunction with the conference will be the Mango Festival at Fairchild Gardens, where we can gorge on mangoes and mango dishes. Also, a number of tours are planned, including the Kampong with extensive fruit tree planting, and a tour of the Fruit & Spice Park. Several members have already reserved rooms at the Hampton Inn on U.S. 1 in Florida City for nights of the 6th, 7th, 8th and 9th of July. Our meeting, which regularly occurs on July 9 this year, will be shifted to July 16 to allow for attendance at the Mango Festival & Rare Fruit Club Conference.

Dear Tropical Fruit Grower:

Our Tropical Fruit Clubs around Florida, California, and elsewhere need to communicate and share resources. In order to encourage this I am producing another annual "Rare Fruit Conference."

During the 1980's, five of these events were held in Florida and one was presented in California. Each of these events featured a program of speakers on tropical fruits, a series of field trips, and discussions of cooperative activities among our clubs.

In the past these were very well received and a lot of fun. This year it will be held at the Fruit & Spice Park in Homestead, Florida July 7th-9th. All clubs are invited to attend. Members will be charged a \$35.00 registration fee. I would like to suggest each club also donate \$100.00 or more to help us bring new speakers to the conference from distant areas. This will allow us to pool our resources and attract speakers that have not been heard. This years' keynote speaker will be Dr. Roberto E. Coronel of the Institute of Plant Breeding, University of the Philippines, Los Banos College, Laguna, Philippines.

Advanced registration will be extremely helpful.

Rare Fruit Club Conference
Fruit & Spice Park
24801 SW 187th Ave.
Homestead, Florida 33031

Registration Form
July 7th-9th, 2000

Name: _____

Amount Enclosed

Address: _____

Members @\$35.00 each: _____

Fax: _____

Club: \$ _____

E-mail: _____

Please make checks payable to:
Tropical Fruit & Vegetable Society
of the Redland

Chris Rollins
Director-Naturalist
Fruit & Spice Park
PH. 305-247-5727
Fax: 305-245-3369
Email: FSP@co.miami-dade.fl.us

Tasting Table: May 2000

00-42

Linda Novak: Very Berry Cake, Guava Nut Bread, Blueberries, Punch
Sally Lee: Blueberry Pound Cake, Kei Apples, Zucchini Bread, Lemonade
Paul Branesky: Pickled Mango
Al Roberts: Peanut Butter Cookies
Gerald Amyot: Peanut Butter Pie
Arnold & Lillian Stark: Lemonade
Jud Newcombe: Lychee Jelly
Pat Jean: Blueberries, Blueberry muffin
Pat McGauley: Red Lime Marmalade
Rose Terenzi: Calamondin Bread
Janet Conard: Sugar Cookies
Paul Zmoda: Canned Figs
Ed & Althia Musgraves: Ambrosia
Beth Reddicliffe: 7-up Cake
Thom Scott: Pineapple Chunks
Judy Cimafranca: Blueberries

A huge 'Thanks' for all the delectable donations to our tasting table.

U.S.F. BUTTERFLY FESTIVAL

June 10 & 11 will be Butterfly Days at USF. On Thursday, June 8, our club will be helping to set up the tent and tables as we did last year. We will need 8 to 10 members at USF about 9:00 in the morning, mainly to set up the tents for the butterflies, which will be released into the tents Friday evening for viewing Saturday & Sunday. For those who are not employed or who can get away from work on Thurs., June 8, mark this important date on your calendar and come out to give us a hand.

COMPOST WORKSHOP

The Hillsborough County Cooperative Extension Service will be sponsoring a free workshop on composting and mulching on Monday, June 12, at 7:00 PM at the Bruton Memorial Library in Plant City. The workshop is open to the public and includes a presentation, information packet and free compost bin for each participating household. For directions and registration information please call the Cooperative Extension Service at 744-5519.

RFCI Tampa Bay Chapter
313 Pruett Rd
Seffner FL



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