



# NEWSLETTER

MAY 2001

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

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

PRESIDENT: JAMES LEE

WEBSITE: [www.rarefruit.org](http://www.rarefruit.org) (Charles Novak)

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

NEXT MEETING: MAY 13

MEETING PLACE: UNIV. OF SOUTH FLORIDA Bldg BSF100

**PROGRAM:** Our speaker this month will be our good friend Gene Joyner from the Palm Beach County Extension Service. Gene is a knowledgeable authority on tropical fruiting trees and will be providing a slide presentation of tropical fruiting plants suitable for growing in the Tampa Bay area. His visits to our meetings are always enjoyed by our members and allow for renewal of longtime friendships. He will also 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 & plant raffle. Please contribute. All in all, it should be an exceptionally interesting meeting so we expect to see a large crowd. We know it is Mothers' Day and we'd like to remind you that mothers are welcome.

## WHAT'S HAPPENING

Apr-May 2001

by PAUL ZMODA

Our "All-in-One" almond tree flowered for the first time. This past winter, I decided to prune it only minimally for a change. As it had no blooms before, I may have found out why. The flowers appeared primarily on the tips of its unusual, spirally curved branches - branches that I normally would have shortened if I had pruned it like a peach tree, to which it is closely related. Unfortunately, no almonds set this year despite two adjacent peaches full of pink blossoms at the same time.

Some time back I received a small shipment of "Chinese Chestnuts" from Pennsylvania from a man whose son supposedly eats lots of them. They didn't look like any chestnuts I'd ever seen. In fact, they looked suspiciously like Buckeyes. I planted a few in our vegetable garden and came to realize after they had sprouted that they are Buckeyes as they have palmate leaves. Buckeyes should not be eaten as they are toxic. They make attractive shade trees, though, and are not normally found here. I'll see how they take our hot summer.

I repotted many of our large specimen trees and close to 200 rooted cuttings and seedlings. I air-layered the true tea camellia and star fruit, and made dozens of new cuttings of plums and olives.

Pecan 'Stuart' (or 'Desireable' - not sure which) is flowering well. We've been feasting on blueberries, Surinam cherries, Purple Peacock pole beans, carrots and peas. This has been a productive spring so far - everything is nice and green and growing.

New plantings: passion fruit, blueberry, blackberry, banana, citrus, avocado grafted from the Lees' neighbors' giant tree, wild plum, fig, pawpaw and African jackleberry.

## APRIL PLANT RAFFLE

PLANT	DONOR	WINNER
Avocado (3)	Heath	?
Passion Fruit	"	Don Long
Rose Apple	"	Andy Hendrickson
Pineapple	"	?
Chaya	"	Elaine Lanton
Papaya	"	V. Reddicliffe
Beauty Berry	"	B. Reddicliffe
Carambola	"	Kyle Campbell
Basil	Sal Russo	Susan McAveety
"	"	?
Roselle	"	Heath
"	"	Pat McGauley
Basket of Citrus	Novak	?
Blueberry Jam	"	Sal Russo
Flora Grande Blackberry	Don Long	John Braden
Blackberry Jam	Linda Long	?
Key Lime	Janet Conard	Pat McGauley
"	Al Roberts	?
Endive	Thom Scott	Bev Busch
Shrimp Plant	Lee	Linda Long
Red Butterfly Plant	"	Andy Hendrickson
Calla Lily	"	?
Avocado	"	Kyle Campbell
Loquat	"	Elaine Lanton
Four O'Clock	"	?
Yesterday Today Tomorrow	"	?
Lady Palm	Mann	Jim Stout
Sugar Apple	John Braden	Don Kraus
Compost Tomatoes	Pat McGauley	?
Seedling Guava	"	?
Pink Sage	Bill Advian	?
Devils Trumpet	?	Beth Reddicliffe
Fruit Basket	Janet Conard	Verna Dickey

***Tasting Table: April 2001******Bob Heath: Fruit Muffins******Beverly Burch: Rum Brownies******Thom Scott: Mulberry Fruit Salad******Don Kraus: Chocolate cookies******Cheryl Drew: Butter Pecan Cake with Cream Cheese Icing******Mann: Fresh Fruit Platter of Joboticaba, Starfruit, and Loquats******Novak: Blueberry Cheesecake, Apple Pie Spread & Crackers, Fresh Pineapple-  
Blueberries-Blood Orange Platter, Juice******Lee: Tofu Pudding, Fried rice, Strawberry Cake, Sweet & Sour Tofu******Ed & Lorraine Walsh: Pineapple Cake, Grape juice******And several other delicious dishes not listed on the signup sheet. Please list your  
donation on the signup sheet and ask Sally Lee for your Plant Exchange ticket.******Thanks a million!!!******Long: Blackberry Cobbler******Beth Reddicliffe: Easter Bunny Cake******Terenzi: Chocolate Kohula Cheesecake******McGauley: Orange & Raspberry chocolates***

THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU to all members who worked at the USF Spring Plant Sale. It was a very successful sale and it was your efforts that made it such a success.

## Neophyte Errors #4

by SHERMAN DORN

More failure from your Florida gardening newcomer here. I knew I should've waited for a Rare Fruit Council presentation on strawberries before trying them on my own. That mail order Strawberry Bin (using recycled plastic) just looked so attractive and useful. Then I called a Plant city strawberry supply place and got about 80 of the plants and alternated potting mix layers and strawberries just as the instructions said. And then I called Sydney Park Brown (Hillsborough County Extension agent) and found out what turned out to be the mistake: putting in the strawberry plants without accounting for the compaction of the mix over the season, as I would water the bins. I assured her that I had thoroughly wet the potting mix before I put it in. But everything except for the top plants died as the mix pushed them down, down, down until the crowns were gone, gone, gone (which I'm told rhymes with "down" in some British dialect).

In the meantime, I've discovered a crucial bit of parenting/gardening when you have tender plants: don't let your children adopt them. The cool winter burned the foliage off our mango, and our daughter was ready to blame us for not protecting it sufficiently, until out popped some growth. Whew! After we had the Chinese tallow cut down in the fall, another dead tree would've been the end of our relationship with her.

Finally (I've got lots of failures to talk about this month), I mistakenly thought some cactus pads I got for free would be appropriate to eat. I planted them and, earlier this year, tore off a young pad to eat...promptly sending my scurrying for a pair of tweezers. I never knew spines could grow in such profusion without being clearly visible.

## PLANT LOCATOR DEPARTMENT

Have you just heard about a plant that's new to you and need to know where you can get it? We have a new department in the Club, the Plant Locator Dept., in the capable hands of Sally Lee. Discover a plant, determine its name and Sally will try to find a source of supply for you. Her telephone # is 813-982-9359.

### New members: April 2001

John Stonehouse	Clearwater	Carmen Feliciano	Zephyrhills
Gabriel Stovall	St. Petersburg	Wade Herman	Tampa
Tom Tomlinson	Temple Terrace	Janet & Cody Kemp	Clearwater
Rich Parker & Diane Jensen	Sarasota	Chris Clague	Lakeland
Ronald & Deborah Altic	Clearwater	Neil Leonard	Tampa
Monet Sexauer	Bradenton	Eldon Payne	Tampa
Rita Emberson	Wesley Chapel	Veronica Merriman	Tampa
Theresa Miller	Brandon	Stan Roberts	Tampa
Michael Gertinisan	Brandon	Donald Haselwood	Lutz
Lillian Blessing-Woods	Lakeland	Lynn Keen	Lithia
Mark & Cindy Dauck	Lutz	Barbara Dalrymple	Tampa
Cathy Rooks	Wesley Chapel	Evd Jiminez	Clearwater

### MEMBERS' CORNER:

Sale: Evinrude Outboard Motor (3 or 5 HP) \$50. Charles Novak (813) 754-1399



## DUES NOTICE

If you haven't paid your dues, your membership in our local RFCI has expired. This could be the last newsletter you receive. However, it's not too late to re-register by sending in your \$18.00 annual dues. We would certainly hate to lose you so please sit down and write your check for another year to RFCI and mail it to

Charles Novak  
2812 N Wilder Rd  
Plant City FL 33565-2669

From the President  
Jimmy Lee

Thanks to all the club members who came out to help with the USF Spring Plant Festival. There was a very good turnout of people looking to purchase fruiting plants. We had a total of 22 new memberships over the two days of the sale. We had a lot of fun and I hope even more members will join us in the future.

Everyone enjoyed the hands-on propagation demonstrations at the April club meeting. It was very educational and we had a good time. It was requested that we have another one in the near future.

The speaker for the May meeting (on Mother's Day) will be Gene Joyner. Gene always gives an enjoyable and inspiring presentation. He has been growing rare and tropical fruits for many years and will be able to answer any questions you might have. The club has taken 2 bus trips to tour his Unbelievable Acres in West Palm Beach. He is very much admired for all he has accomplished. Hopefully we can visit his Unbelievable Acres again in the near future. Everyone interested in growing rare and tropical fruits should come to hear his presentation.

On June 8 we need help setting up for the USF Botanical Garden Butterfly Exhibit. If you can help please notify me or Charles Novak for more information and a time to meet at the garden.

On June 9 we plan to take a bus trip to ECHO (Education Concerns for Hunger Organization) in Ft. Myers. It should be an interesting, educational and fun trip. If you plan to go on the bus please contact me (813-982-9359) or let us know at the May meeting. We need to know how many plan to go on the bus and their \$10 must be paid by May 15 as we need to make the final arrangements with the bus company. A signup sheet will be available at the May meeting.

The following is a list of programs for the next three months:

May 13: Gene Joyner-Growing tropical fruits

June 8: USF Botanical Garden Butterfly Exhibit

June 9: Trip to ECHO

July 8: Dr. Steve Futch-All you need to know for growing Citrus

Aug. 12: Katie Roberts-Edible Landscaping



## GRAFTING

Grafting is a method of joining a part of one plant with another in a way that will cause them to unite and grow as a single unit. Since any mechanical means which achieves proper contact between parts of two different plants may lead to a successful graft, it follows that practically unlimited methods of grafting are available. However, we are concerned here with the simpler and more common means of grafting as shown in Figures 1 through 5.

Grafting of deciduous trees such as apples, peaches, pecans, jujubes and persimmons is normally done during the dormant season, preferably immediately before the tree is due to bud out. Non-deciduous trees such as oranges, loquats, carambolas, may be grafted at any time during the year when new growth is imminent. Avocados are normally grafted late in the winter just before spring growth begins. There are many reasons for grafting but the most common is probably to propagate a desirable plant by joining small portions on to an established seedling tree. With certain plants, propagation by rooting of cuttings may be more satisfactory but with most fruit trees, grafting has many advantages. Since seedlings from desirable fruiting trees frequently results in undesirable fruit, some methods of propagation which preserves the quality of the fruit is necessary. Only plants with close botanical relationship can be grafted successfully; unrelated plants have physiological differences which prevent a union. Viruses also may cause a grafting failure. A successful graft can only be obtained when the scion is oriented as it normally grows. The scion fitted upside down on a root stock will not grow properly.

The established plant or seedling onto which a graft is made is called the root stock. The portion of the desirable fruiting tree being grafted onto the root stock is called the scion. In making the graft, it is important that the scion be protected from drying both before and after joining. This is usually done by covering the exposed surfaces of the scion with a plastic bag or grafting tape, entirely covering the scion. After grafting it is important that the soil moisture be kept relatively high. If the root system of the root stock is allowed to dry out grafting will be a failure. It is important that the graft union be a clean snug fit with intimate contact of the cambium layers in both the scion and root stock. Wrapping the union with grafting tape provides this intimate contact as well as providing support for the scion on the root stock.

Splice Graft. This method is the simplest way to join scion to root stock. Stock and scion should be of equal thickness, from 1/8" to 1/2" in diameter. Make a long diagonal cut of equal length on the scion and root stock. Fit cut surfaces together and use grafting tape to hold the parts together as shown in Fig. I. As the scion and root stock are the same size, the cambium layers should match exactly. Allow at least two active buds in the scion wood and cover the entire scion with a plastic bag until the scion buds out.

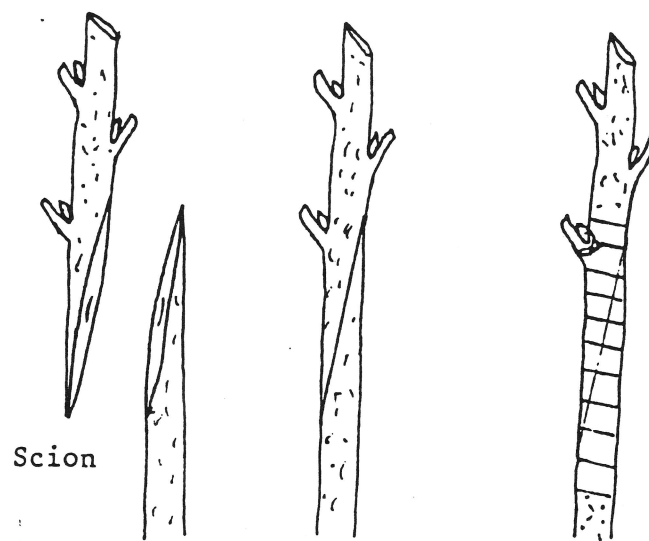


Fig. I Splice Graft

Whip & Tongue Graft. This is one of the most commonly used and useful grafts for woody plants. It is used for top working and producing new plants primarily on deciduous trees. It works best with stock and scion or equal diameter and less than 1/2" in thickness. Make a long diagonal cut in both the scion and stock as in the splice graft. Make the second or tongue cut on stock and scion by splitting at the center of the first cut down through the center core of the stem until the split is opposite the base of the first cut. After the tongues are cut, pry open the tongues and insert into each other until they are interlocked as shown in Fig. II. Secure the parts by wrapping tightly with grafting tape. If the scion is smaller than the stock, fit the tongues together so that the outside surface of the stock and one side of the scion are aligned. Cover the entire scion with a plastic bag until the buds sprout.

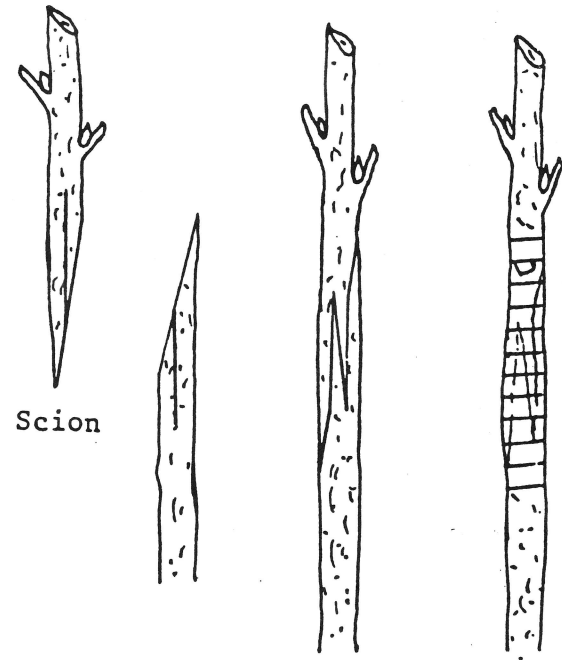


Fig. II Whip &amp; Tongue Graft

Cleft Graft. Cleft grafting is a very simple and commonly used grafting method. The scion may be anywhere from 1/8" to 1/2" in diameter and should have two to three active buds. The stock may be from 1/8" to 4" in diameter. Cut off the root stock at a right angle in relation to its main axis. Use a knife for small stock and a clefting tool for large stock to split the stock down the center for 1 to 3 inches. If the stock is large, it may be necessary to drive a wedge down the center of the stock to open the split to receive the scion. If the scion is within half the diameter of the root stock, only one scion will be used. If the scion is less than half the diameter of the root stock, two scions will be used. The scion is tapered as shown in Fig. III. Insert the wedge of the scion into the stock so that the cambium layers are in contact on one side or both. The scion should completely fill the split in the root stock so that contact exists along the length of the entire wedge. Wrap the union with grafting tape and cover the entire scion with a plastic bag.

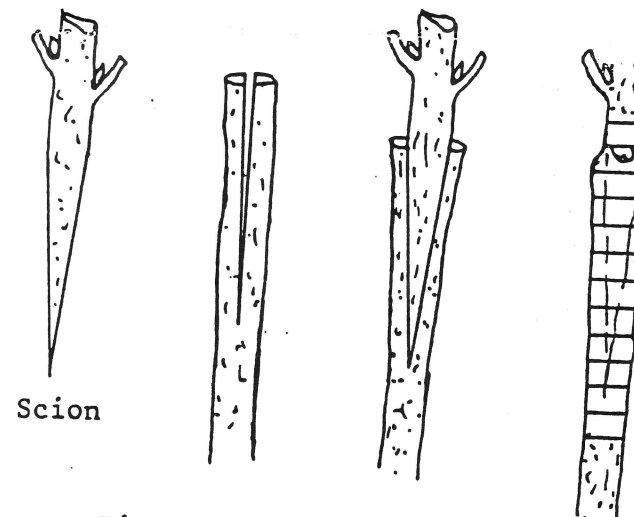


Fig. III Cleft Graft

Side Graft. The side graft may be used for producing new plants and is very successful on citrus, avocados, carambolas, loquats, etc. It provides for a large surface of cambium contact and for this reason a union is most likely to occur. Make a rather shallow cut about 1-1/2" to 2" long on the side of the stock, cutting slightly inward as the cut is made. At the base of this cut, make a short inward and downward cut to intersect with the first cut, thus allowing removal of a piece of wood and bark. It is preferable that the stock and scion be relatively the same size. The depth of the cut in the stock will be dependent upon the size of the scion wood. Prepare the scion

with a long cut the same length and width as that of the first cut on the stock. Make a short cut on the opposite side of the base of the scion to match that in the root stock. Insert the scion in the root stock as shown in Fig. IV. Secure the scion by wrapping with tape and covering the scion wood with a plastic bag. It is not necessary to top the root stock until the scion buds begin to grow.

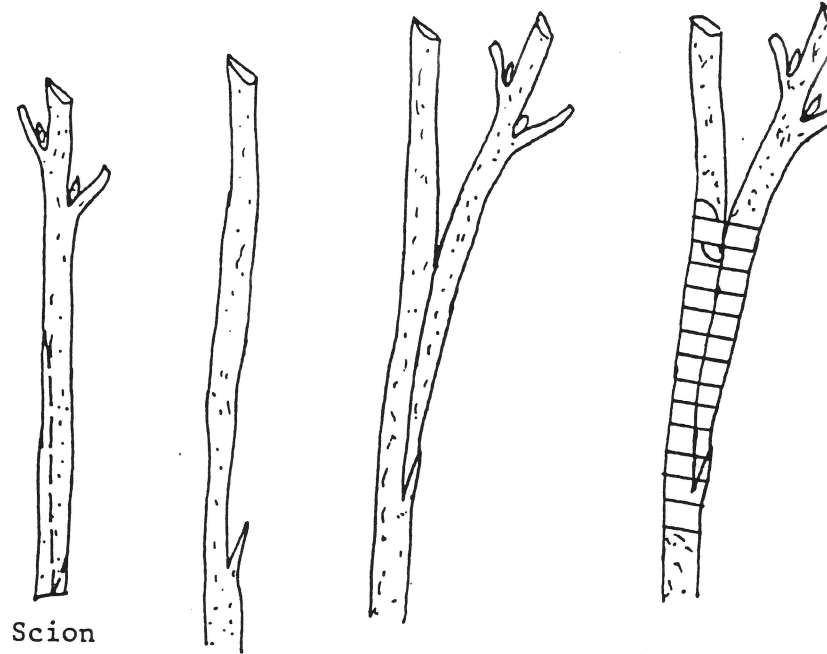


Fig. IV Side Graft

Approach Graft. The approach graft is used to graft together two plants while both remain on their own roots. This is particularly advantageous in grafting plants that are exceptionally hard to graft. It affords the least shock to the scion wood and is almost 100% effective. The scion in this case is usually a limb of a tree growing in the ground. The root stock is normally in a pot which can be tied up to the growing tree so that the scion limb is adjacent to the seedling tree in the pot. A single long smooth cut is made on adjacent surfaces of the scion and root stock. The cuts are brought together and wrapped tightly with grafting tape. No additional treatment is necessary with the exception of maintaining the moisture in the potted plant. After the graft union is assured, the top of the potted plant is removed and the potted plant is cut loose from the tree below the graft union as shown in Fig. V.

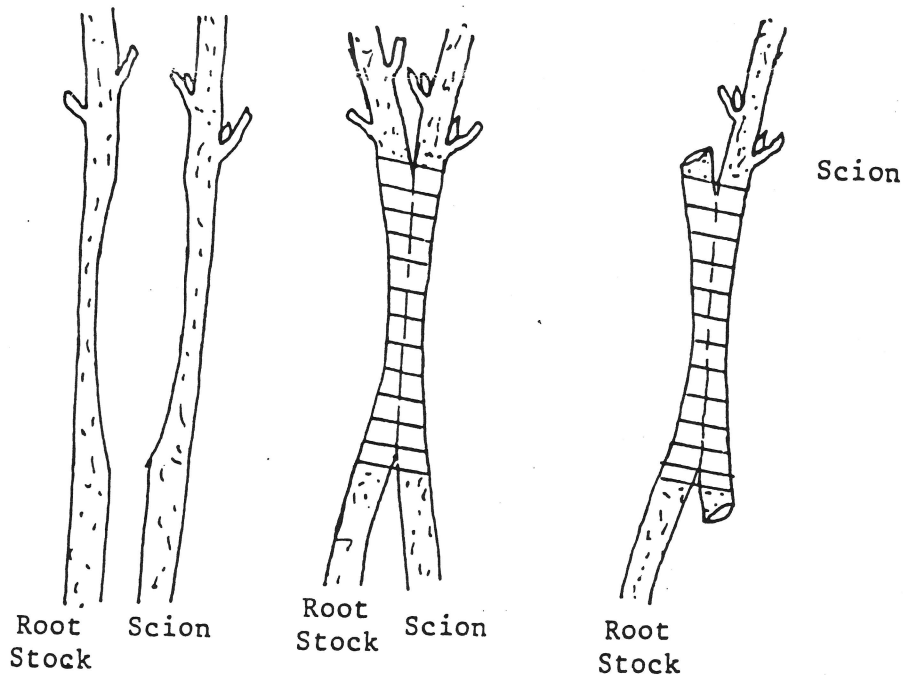


Fig. V Approach Graft

For additional information on grafting, see the following:

"They Why and How of Home Horticulture" by D.R. Bienz; W.H. Freeman and Co., San Francisco.

"The Grafters Handbook" by R. J. Garner; Oxford University Press, New York.

\* \* \* \* \*

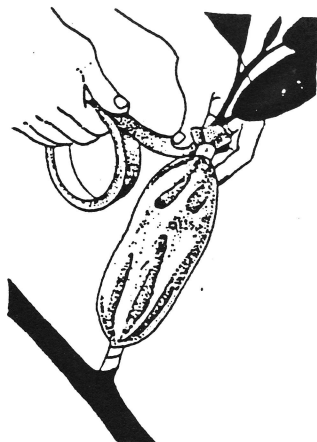
Lettuce not be radish in our judgement of these corny jokes. They just seem to turnip while composting the Newsletter.

## AIR LAYERING

Air layering is a method by which branches, while still attached to a plant, are induced to form roots. It is one of the oldest artificial techniques of propagation. It is reputed to have been used in China over 4000 years ago. Because of its use in French gardening in the seventeenth century, air layering is also referred to as marcottage.

The method is very simple and the materials needed are few, a sharp knife, moist sphagnum moss, polyethylene plastic, aluminum foil and tape.

A suitable branch on a preferred tree is selected, one quarter inch in diameter or larger. The branch is girdled just below a dormant bud, removing the bark and cambium down to the hard wood. This will entirely interrupt the sap flow and if no further action is taken, the branch will die. The wound may now be treated with a rooting hormone such as rootone. The wound is next covered with sphagnum moss which is the preferred rooting medium because it holds water, is well aerated and is readily manipulated. Soak the moss for several hours so it is completely saturated. Squeeze the moss into a ball to remove excess moisture and shape the ball around the wound. Next wrap the moss ball with a square of polyethylene and secure the ends of the plastic with tape. The plastic may now be covered with aluminum foil to keep out the light. It is important to ensure that rain water cannot run down into the moss and waterlog it. So, wrap the tape around the ends of the plastic and foil, overlapping on to the stem.

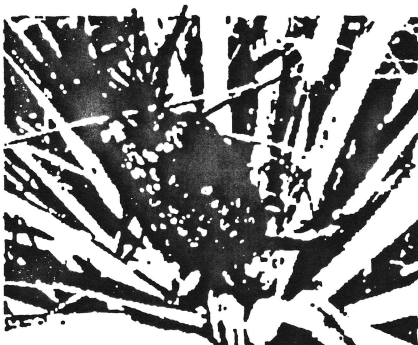


The cover applied this way will retain moisture, maintain a warm environment and allow gases to permeate the moss.

Development of roots will take from four weeks to several months. When roots are well established, the branch may be severed immediately below the cover, which is removed to expose the roots. Most of the moss is removed and the branch may be set in a suitable sized pot. Firm the soil and water well. Also, prune the entire branch by at least 1/3 to prevent expiration of moisture. Keep moist and shaded until the branch shows vigorous growth.

\* \* \*

## A GUIDE TO TROPICAL FRUIT TREES &amp; VINES (continued from Feb.)

**FAMILY - BROMELIACEAE**37. *Ananas comosus* - Pineapple

A tropical American herb to 4 feet in height. rosette leaves to 3 feet long, about 1-1/2 inches wide, with spiny tips and prickly edges. Flowers are violet to red, producing fruit in 15-24 months. Fruit may reach 1 foot in length, is yellow-orange at maturity and has white to yellowish sweet aromatic flavor. Fruit matures in

about 6 months. Pulp is eaten fresh, canned, frozen or dried. Fruit is also juiced and used in numerous drinks or by itself. New plants are usually started from suckers that develop along the stem of the main plant, by slips produced just below the fruit and from the tops of the fruit.

38. *Bromelia balansae* - Heart of flame

South American plant related to and resembling the pineapple. Leaves to 4 feet in length, 1-1/4 inches wide and white-wooly at base. Flowers are violet or maroon with scarlet bracts. Fruit is yellow, acid and unpalatable - containing considerable amounts of calcium oxylate. Diluted with water, it makes a pleasant tasting drink.

39. *Bromelia pinquiti* - Wild pineapple

This plant resembles the pineapple plant, But its leaves attain a length of 6 feet or more and contain prickly edges. Flowers are white or pale pink. Fruit is a crowded head of berries - separate, not joined as in the pineapple - and looks like small plums. Juice is acid but can be made into a drink.

**TRIP TO ECHO**

ECHO is a foundation whose primary purpose is to feed the world. They follow the old Bible quotation that says, "If I give you a fish, I feed you for a day. If I teach you to fish, I feed you forever." They provide seeds, plants, knowhow and assistance in teaching people, especially in developing and backwards countries, farming techniques, food preparation, food storage, sanitation and personal hygiene all over the world. Their facilities in Ft Myers are quite impressive, and on June 9 we will take a bus tour of their facilities and possibly, if time permits, a stop at Bob & Vivian's Treehouse Nursery on Pine Island. All of our members and families are invited, but it is critically important that we know how many people will be riding the bus in order to charter the proper sized one. The fee for each member is \$10.00, which is a token amount. The club will finance the rest. Complete details will be available in the June newsletter. Please send your \$10.00 fee before May 15 to Linda Novak, 2812 N. Wilder Rd, Plant City FL 33565-2669, if you wish to join us on this fun trip, but haven't signed up yet.

The bus only has 55 seats so seating is based on first 55 applications,

ECHO TRIP \$10.00 per attendee		
Name	Date	Amount

## THE PRICKLY PEAR

The Prickly Pear, a fruit of several varieties of *Opuntia* cactus, is a native of the Americas, probably originating in northern Mexico or the southwestern United States. It is an egg shaped fruit as large as a large chicken egg and is more properly described as a berry. It has a tomato or persimmon like skin dotted with prickly warts which are extremely annoying if contacted. The pulp is sweet, soft and spongy when ripe and of a striking beautiful red color. The external color of the ripe fruit ranges from dark purple to soft green in different species. In Florida the color is usually a dark red. Other varieties available in Europe may be chartreuse, inside and out. Of these the most delicious are grown in Sicily.

The prickly pear, also known as cactus pear, Tuna, Indian Fig or Barbary Fig, is very popular in a good part of the world although, because of its somewhat bland flavor and many hard black seeds, it is not a common market fruit in the U.S. Everywhere in southern Europe and North Africa and in Australia, South Africa, Southwest Asia, and Central and South America the fruit is well accepted and marketed. Mexico is a major supplier of the fruit and Elizabeth Schneider in her book "Uncommon Fruits and Vegetables" states that "Mexico's current production alone is double the current world production of apricots, and more than double the production of papayas, strawberries and avocados." This is quite amazing for such a prickly, bland, seedy fruit.

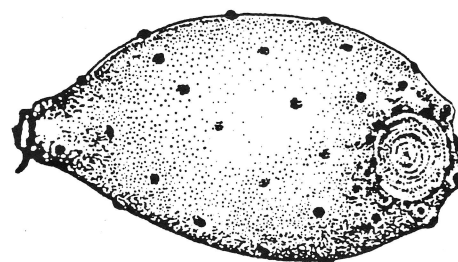
The fruit may be mixed with lemon juice and sugar in a processor to puree them, then sieved to remove the seeds, chilled and enjoyed straight or with rum to taste. The pulp may also be sieved and cooked up to make a spectacularly colored jam. In any event it is always necessary to peel the fruit first however it is to be used.

TAMPA BAY CHAPTER RFCI  
4109 DeLEON ST  
TAMPA FL 33609



FIRST CLASS MAIL

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



prickly pear

