



NEWSLETTER

JULY 2001

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

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

NEXT MEETING: JULY 8

MEETING PLACE: UNIV. OF SO. FLORIDA Bldg BSF100

PROGRAM: OUR MEETING THIS MONTH ON JULY 8 WILL INCLUDE DR STEVEN FUTCH. He is the extension agent for the Tri County Extension Service and an authority on growing citrus. Despite all of our efforts to raise rare fruit, still most of us have citrus trees. This will be an opportunity to learn all we need to know about growing citrus trees. We will also have our regular tasting table, plant raffle and social hour. Let's make this one of our best.

U S F 2001 Tropical Plant Fair

The RFCI will be participating for the first time in the annual Tropical Plant Fair on July 14 & 15, one week after our meeting. This sale will be similar to the Spring & Fall Plant Festivals in which we normally participate, except that this sale will be confined to commercial nurseries and organizations with no club participation with the exception of the RFCI. All of our members are invited to help and are desperately needed to make this sale a success. We will be in a different location than we normally are at the Spring & Fall Plant Fairs, but our area will be roughly the same size. We expect this to be a social event as well as a money maker for the club.

Our participation will begin around 1:00 Friday afternoon, July 13, raising tents, setting up tables, arranging plants and posters til about 6:00 pm. On Saturday, July 14, the Gardens will be open at 7:00 am for our final preparations.

The front gate will close at 9:00 am Saturday & Sunday and participants will have to enter by the side south gate after the front gate closes. All vehicles must be off the property by 9:00 am on Saturday & Sunday. The Festival will end at 4:00 pm on Saturday & 3:00 pm on Sunday.

We will have ID cards for RFCI workers available at the July 8 meeting. Only those with ID 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 ID card, you may pick one up at the meeting or call Bob Heath at 813-289-1068 in the evening. Price for admission without ID cards is \$2.00, reimbursed by the club.

Enter the Gardens from Bruce B Downs one block north of Fowler. Turn east on Pine Street & left at Alumni Drive. Go one block to the Gardens entrance on the left.

ECHO Trip

We left Brandon Town Center on the bus at 7:45 & got to ECHO at 9:15. We visited the book store until 10:00 waiting for the tour to start. Several members bought books for their libraries. Before the tour we were given a briefing on ECHO. Among other things they provide little known seeds to 142 countries. They provide them free of charge to the farms in those third world countries. "They don't know us & we don't know them directly. There's a bunch of middlemen. They're called missionaries and agricultural developmental people. They know the farms; they know the needs of the farmers; they contact us via mail & via the internet. We provide them with the seeds free of charge; they in turn pass them on to the farms. It's a pack of seeds about 4" square, enough for say a 50 ft. row, so that when they grow, the farmer gets the produce, enough seeds for next year & enough seeds for neighbors. It's a hand up, not a hand out. It's a permanent solution to their hunger problems."

ECHO is presently training about 7 or 8 interns, to one of which we were introduced. The interns need to know about raising fruit & vegetables. After a year of training, they have the option of a 3month tour of farms in Haiti where they can experience an atmosphere of people actually starving. ECHO has been at their present site since 1981 so this is their 20th anniversary & they are graduating their 100th intern this year. Those of us who wished were allowed to sign up to receive the ECHO newsletter that is sent out free of charge 4 times a year to people in the United States & Canada.

The newsletter keeps people up to date as to what's happening on the farms, new interns, new ideas, etc. The current issue has a really interesting article about how to get up to 10 times the production of rice by using just a few little changes in the way it's grown. They also have an annual conference the first week in November, which attracts some 250 representatives from around the world, basically missionaries. They come there for about a week and exchange ideas and information and get seeds & budwood, that sort of thing.

They also have an annual conference in May in Haiti for that section of the world and one in Kenya in Africa. They are rapidly expanding to 40 acres at their existing site and creating a global village concept. We were invited to come back a year from now to see the village. Not much is going on right now but within the next year they will have areas for tropical highlands, tropical lowlands, monsoon areas, hot tropics, rain forest, etc. with the structures, plants, animals, tools, etc. appropriate to that climactic area of the world.

After the description we went across the street to the tasting table where we tasted pummelo, lychees, nopales and Surinam cherries; then into the nursery in the semi-arid area and stood in the shade of the Neem tree (a native of India) where we were given a description of the benefits of the Neem tree; then to the fruit tree arboretum. We saw an extensive row of annonas, atemoyas, sugar apples, custard apples & others, after which we met their few Nubian goats and their Kapahdin sheep, which is a non-wool producer. The farmers in Africa use the sheep & goats for meat and fertilizer. We visited a small garden area divided into several sections where they rely on chicken cultivation using a special breed of chickens primarily suited to hot weather.

We next visited their herb garden & then the tropical fruit tree section and a pond with pilapia fish & a pen with several ducks.

After the tour we returned to the auditorium for a short movie about the ECHO program.

We left ECHO about 12:30 for home. On the way we stopped at Crowley's Nursery, met Kathy Crowley and explored an extensive collection of tropical fruiting and ornamental trees and plants. Some of us bought plants and we got back to Brandon about 5:00.

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What is green and makes pretty music?

A PICKLE-0.

NEW MEMBERS:	Todd & Toni Singleton	Riverview, FL
	Phil & Lettie Roets	Apollo Beach, FL
	George & Marilyn Fears	Balm, FL
	Millie Fielder	Tampa, FL
	Sven Merten	Fallbrook, CA

WHAT'S HAPPENING

June-July 2001

by PAUL ZMODA

I enjoyed our field trip to ECHO on June 9. I am especially interested in the displays of vegetable gardens growing in so many innovative ways. In our own gardens, lima beans are growing well for us for the first time ever. Tomatoes 'Celebrity' and 'Principe Borghese' are doing well also. In fact tomatoes, eggplants and peppers do better and better every season as the soil is becoming built up with organic matter, dolomite, super phosphate and lots of mulch.

Earth BoxesTM are an interesting way to successfully grow vegetables safely away from nematodes and root problems associated with drought. The Earth Box is a plastic box which combines hydroponics with container growing. Testing (and my own experience) has shown that plants grow faster, larger and healthier in Earth Boxes than in most soils. You cannot over-water an Earth Box because the excess water exits through a specially placed drain hole.

I make my own growing box/chambers with plastic boxes, PVC pipe, window screens and garbage bags. I will be glad to explain how I do it. Call me or see me at the next meeting.

To order your own official Earth Box call 1-800-821-8838 or (813) 823-5900. This is truly an amazing growing system which can help you get the most out of your vegetable plantings.

New plantings: Allspice trees, yardlong beans, okra & giant jaboticaba.

FAIRCHILD MANGO FESTIVAL

The Mango Festival this year at Fairchild Gardens will be held July 14 from 9:30 am to 4:30 pm. The Fruit & Spice Park will not be holding their Tropical Fruit Conference this year as they have many times in years past. For additional information, call the Fairchild Gardens at 305-667-1651.

GRAFTING KNIVES & PARAFILM (for grafting) are now available. The grafting knives range in price from \$6 to \$15. The Parafilm (2 in. x 250 ft. roll) is \$18 per roll. The club has 24 rolls available to members. If interested in knives and/or Parafilm see Charles Novak at the July 8 meeting or contact him at (813)754-1399.

BAKED ITEMS NEEDED FOR TASTING PLATES at the USF Botanical Garden 2001 Tropical Plant Fair, July 14 & 15. We will be offering to the public tasting plates consisting of fresh fruit and baked items. We have members who are wonderful bakers (as we all know from the tasting table at our monthly meetings) so **please** prepare some baked items using fruit (such as cookies & small cupcakes/muffins & breads). It would be greatly appreciated! If you have questions please contact Linda Novak (813)754-1399 or Sally Lee (813)982-9359

From the President
Jimmy Lee

I hope everyone will try to attend the July 8 meeting as our speaker, Dr. Steve Futch, is an expert on citrus. He can answer all your questions relating to Citrus.

The following weekend, July 14 & 15, we will be participating in the USF Botanical Garden Tropical Plant Fair. We will be selling sample plates of tropical fruits and baked items so we would appreciate if some generous members would bring in some baked items (cookies, small muffins or cupcakes and other baked items that can be easily cut). Also, members please donate any fruits that you can spare. We will need members to help as cashiers, cutting fruit, assembling plates, helping with the trees, etc. On the Friday before the sale we need several people to be at the Garden about 2 P.M. to help unload the fruit trees and set up a tent. If you have questions about this event please call me at (813)982-9359, or Charles Novak at (813)754-1399, or Bob Heath at (813) 289-1068.

The trip to ECHO was a success-everyone found it to be interesting and informative. A good time was had by all.

I want to thank the following members who showed up at the USF Botanical Garden on Saturday, July 2, to help to put up the Butterfly House: Bob Heath, Thom Scott, Paul Branesky, Jim & Iris Stout, Charles & Linda Novak, Jon Kolb.

Programs for July and August:

July 8: Dr. Steve Futch-All you need to know for growing Citrus
July 14 & 15: 2001 USF Botanical Garden Tropical Plant Fair
August 12: Katie Roberts-Edible Landscaping

01-51

BLUEBERRIES: Boost Your Brain With Blue

Blueberries are blowing researchers away with their nutritional benefits. In a widely publicized Tufts study, blueberries topped the list of 60 fruits and vegetables for antioxidant strength. According to the scientists, consuming this fruit may help protect against an aging-related decline in memory and coordination.

The research team of the USDA's Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging at Tufts put blueberries to the test in a number of experiments related to older brains. "Tufts University Health & Nutrition Letter" explains it this way: Free radicals (unstable oxygen molecules) cause stress and damage that increase the brain's susceptibility to aging, including memory loss, compromised balance and coordination ability. But the super-ability of blueberries to quench the free radical culprits may help the brain stay younger longer.

Anthocyanins, antioxidant phytochemicals responsible for the deep blue color of the berries, provide health protection. One of the Tufts blueberry studies found that anthocyanins helped red blood cells fight oxidative stress at a significant level. But the protective effects petered out after 24 hours ("Biochem Biophys Acta" 2000). Consequently, daily consumption of blueberries may help protect red blood cells against reactive oxygen molecules. According to the Wild Blueberry Association of North America, "Eat your blues" is dependable nutritional advice.

The word 'anthocyanin' is taken from two Greek words meaning 'plant' & 'blue'. And blueberries put other antioxidants to work, including carotenoids & vitamin C. Because antioxidants differ in their abilities to scavenge different reactive oxygen molecules, blueberries really pack a punch in attacking a wide range of destructive radicals ("J Agric Food Chem" 2000).

Ronald Prior, PhD, a Tufts researcher, explains, "One half cup of blueberries delivers as much antioxidant power as five servings of other fruits & vegetables... While variety is still a key to a healthy diet, we encourage the consumption of blueberries as one of the daily servings of fruits and vegetables. As long as you're consuming oxygen, you need to be consuming antioxidants on a daily basis."

A three-quarter cup serving of blueberries also packs fiber, calcium, potassium and phosphorus: enough to keep the health blues away!

(taken from Energy Times, June 2001 issue)

Will Citrus Canker Put an End to the Orange in Florida?

By Pedro Botta

Citrus canker is an incurable disease of citrus species that is caused by several strains of bacteria known as *Xanthomonas*. The highly contagious disease is characterized by round, yellowish blisters that form on leaves, limbs, thorns and fruit, causing premature leaf and fruit drop and seriously reducing output. While the bacteria pose no threat to human or animal health and do not affect the flavor of the fruit, they cause such disfigurement that afflicted fruit cannot be sold. As such, an outbreak of citrus canker can have disastrous consequences in Florida and other areas where citrus production is an important sector of the economy.

Citrus canker was first detected in Florida in 1910. By 1933, it was declared eradicated after more than 250,000 trees had been destroyed. The disease reappeared only sporadically over the next five decades. Between 1986 and 1992, infected trees were found at 13 sites in four Florida counties, leading to the destruction of almost 34,000 trees in commercial groves. In 1995, citrus canker was detected in a yard in central Miami-Dade County. Authorities believe the infected tree was brought into Florida from Argentina, where citrus canker has been endemic for the last 25 years. With its \$8.5 billion citrus industry under threat, Florida revived its eradication program.

Despite quarantine and the destruction of infected trees, the canker spread throughout the Miami metropolitan area like wildfire, no doubt aided by the winds and rains of Hurricane Irene in October 1999. By January 2000, the disease had reached commercial lime groves in southern Miami-Dade County. To check its advance, the state has quarantined more than 700 square miles of land in and around the groves and has destroyed nearly 300,000 trees.

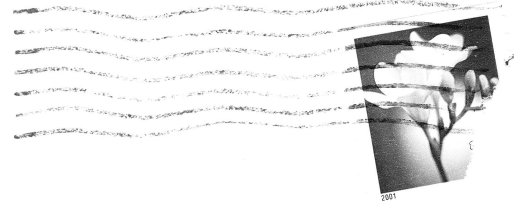
Even with these containment efforts, the citrus canker has continued to spread. Five other South Florida counties have reported outbreaks: Broward, Collier, Hendry, Hillsborough and Manatee. If it continues unabated, the disease will soon threaten the large and lucrative orange and grapefruit groves of central Florida, an economic mainstay second only to tourism.

Citrus canker is difficult to contain because it is spread by wind, rain and contact. Birds carry the bacteria on their feet from tree to tree. Moreover, *Xanthomonas* bacteria thrive in Florida's warm, humid climate. Citrus-growing regions that have hot dry summers, such as Spain, North Africa and Israel, have fewer citrus canker outbreaks. How the latest citrus canker outbreak will play out in Florida remains to be seen. What is certain is that the problem is not likely to be resolved any time soon. The USDA is stepping up its research to find a way to kill the canker without destroying the tree or creating an environmental hazard.

Recently, Brazilian scientists cracked the DNA code of another deadly bacteria that plagues citrus, *Xylella fastidiosa*. Until now, little could be done to control or curb outbreaks of this bacterial disease. Like canker, the only remedy was to destroy the afflicted tree. Researchers in Brazil, financed in part by that country's \$4 billion a year orange juice industry, hope to find the bacteria's Achilles' heel by learning its gene sequence. Already, Brazilian growers are prolonging the life of their afflicted trees by giving them large doses of iron, a remedy suggested by the DNA studies. Scientists in Brazil and the U.S. hope to find similar clues to combat citrus canker by deciphering the gene sequence of the *Xanthomonas* bacteria.

This article first appeared in *Tropical Gardener* magazine, Autumn 2000. For more information about *Tropical Gardener*, see www.TropicalGardener.com or call 305-971-8558.

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