



NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 2001

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

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PRESIDENT: JAMES LEE

WEBSITE: www.rarefruit.org (Charles Novak)

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

NEXT MEETING: AUGUST 12

MEETING PLACE: UNIV OF SOUTH FLORIDA Bldg BSF100

PROGRAM: KATIE ROBERTS IS PRESIDENT OF THE PINELLAS COUNTY CHAPTER OF THE FLORIDA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY. She is also the Communication Chair for the state Native Plant Society. She is a board member of the Brook Creek Preserve and is involved in the identification of insect pests and native butterflies. She will be speaking on edible landscaping with both native plants and exotics. If you have any native plants you would like to identify, you may bring a sample to the next meeting for her perusal. And of course we will have our usual fantastic tasting table and interesting raffle.

NEW MEMBERS:

Robert Bodycott	Tampa	Burl Hankinson	Tarpon Springs
Maya Brown	Brandon	Roberta & Steve Harris	Parrish
Sandy Cannon	Tampa	San Fu Lee	Lutz
Betty Cecil	Lutz	Silvia Nehmad	Riverview
Jerry & Cora Coronel	Pinellas Park	Steve, Marie, Lisa Palis	Clearwater
Carol Curtis-Thomas	Tampa	Rochan & Maya Premraj	Lutz
Alvin & Manu Davis	Lutz	Brian Redgrave	Tarpon Springs
Brian Delaney	Lutz	Ingrid Smith	Tampa
Eileen Dicton	Boynton Beach	Jerry & Marty Springer	Sun City Center
Matilde Feliciano	Lutz	Kristine Tobi	Tampa
Natalie & Pascal Felix	Tampa	Dr. Ram R. Upadhyay	Riverview
George Freeman	Odessa	Joseph & Damaris Vieira	Tampa
David Fyvolent	St. Petersburg	Walter & Karin Yoblonski	Sun City Center
Pamela Gibney	St. Petersburg	Veronica Hall	Tampa
Kandethody & Usha Ramachandran	Tampa		

RFCI LIBRARY

Our Club has a great library with a large selection of interesting books and a librarian, Salvador Russo, who is dedicated to making our library one of the best among RFCI clubs. Sal has the responsibility of keeping track of the books, bringing them to the meetings so they are available for borrowing by Club members. However, the benefits outweigh the responsibility. Sal has the availability of all these interesting books at his fingertips at any time. Unfortunately, Sal's employment at this time is definitely interfering with his duties as librarian. We desperately need someone to work with Sal or take his place as librarian temporarily or permanently. Anyone who feels able to handle this responsibility and benefit from being librarian, please offer your services for the benefit of your Club members who enjoy the availability of great reference volumes.

CITRUS

by DR STEVE FUTCH

Dr Futch began his talk by reminding us that citrus is not a native plant. It's not native to the Americas. It is originally from the Far East but was brought into the Americas by Spanish settlers in the early 1500's in the St Augustine area. Likewise, of course, it is not rare. Today there is approximately 850,000 acres of citrus grown commercially in Florida and there are millions of trees grown in dooryard situations as well. Citrus was originally planted along both coasts in the early 1800's. "Why was it planted along the coast?" you may ask. Because everybody lived on the coast. There were no roads nor railroads: only ships to get citrus to market. I was planted along the coastal areas so it could be shipped by boat to northern cities. By the 1970's it was grown all the way from Gainesville south throughout the entire state of Florida. At that time in Lake City there was about 120,000 acres. Today there is less than 20,000 acres due to '83, '85 & '89 weather. Pasco County had about 35,000 acres. It has less than 10,000 today. So much of the 200,000 acres grown in this area has been moved down to the south so the major production of citrus has moved south in the areas of La Belle, Immokolee, Clewiston, Moore Haven and Belle Glade, where most of the new citrus groves are being planted.

In your dooryard landscape there are many different kinds of citrus you can grow; several kinds of grapefruit: red, white, pink, seedy, seedless; all kinds of tangerines, kumquats, limes, lemons, several kinds of oranges and many crosses.

Okay, where would we want to plant citrus? If you're on a lake, the southern side of the lake would be warmer, but if you don't have a lake, you do have a house. Plant cold sensitive citrus varieties along the southern side of the house rather than the northern side because our winter winds come from the north and northwest. The house will slightly moderate the temperature on the south

side and block some of the wind. So for sensitive trees like limes and lemons, the south side would give you a couple degrees protection but sometimes a couple of degrees can make a very significant difference.

When you plant the citrus tree in your dooryard, Dr Futch recommends to plant it 12 to 15 feet from the house because eventually it's going to grow into a rather large tree. Any closer than that will cause it to grow up against the house. Also, never plant it near the septic tank because some day that septic tank and drainfield are going to have to be repaired. They'll bring in a backhoe and they don't care if there's a tree in the way, bushes, shrubs, roots, whatever, everything goes out with the dirt. So, 12 to 15 feet from the drainfield. Also there's a lot of nutrients in the drainfield and roots tend to seek out the nutrients and will clog the pipes. Also you want to stay back from the neighbor's property line because if you plant too close and your tree encroaches on the neighbor's land, the neighbor will assume that since part of the tree is on his land, all of the tree is on his land, so he's going to kill it because it blocks his view or he's going to take all the fruit.

Now what size tree or what kind of tree should I buy? First how much money you have will determine whether you get a 5 gallon or 50 gallon tree. Do you want something sweet or something sour? So you have to match the purchase to the individual person but obviously the biggest tree you buy will give you fruit the earliest. Probably any of the trees you buy, except possibly lemons and limes, will be grafted. In grafting or budding we choose the root stock to match the soil conditions in Florida. If you live on the coastal areas that have a higher pH, you must use a different root stock than if you live inland where the pH is lower. If it's a wet area, you need to choose a root stock that's more

tolerant to foot rot. Then apply a scion that is of a known characteristic or variety so you get fruit quickly and the kind you want.

When you want to plant the tree you've got to dig the hole. You've got to remove the pot. He said that was pretty fundamental but in a neighbor's yard across the street from him, he noticed that all the plants he had planted around his pool were still in the pots. He always tells people to remove the pot. Check the root system; if the roots are extremely pot bound he recommends breaking up the root system a little to get some of the roots heading out away from the root ball. Compost and other organic material may be mixed in with the surrounding soil but it's really not necessary and won't do a lot of good because the roots are going to grow out beyond the planting hole into the existing soil very soon. Also the tree should definitely not be planted too deeply, which is probably one of the biggest problems with people planting citrus trees. The bud union should definitely always be above the ground with citrus trees so the scion doesn't form roots below ground. In short, plant the tree at the same level that it was growing in the pot. After it's planted, watered in and compacted, we need to make a water retaining dam around the tree out of the excess soil to hold water at the tree. Water it well when it's planted and a couple of times a week until it is established for maybe 3 or 4 months depending upon rainfall.

Assuming we're planting a tree from a 3 gallon pot, during its first year, fertilize 4 to 5 times at one pound of fertilizer each application. Use a fertilizer like 8-2-8, one that's high in nitrogen and potassium but low in phosphorus, and lots of trace elements. Phosphorus can be low because it is not easily leached from the soil. Phosphorus is important for citrus but it tends to accumulate in the soil because it's not leached out so easily; therefore the phosphorus content can be low. In the second year reduce the application to about 4 times but increase the quantity to about 1½ pounds. In the third year, 3 times will be sufficient but increase each application to 2 to 2½ pounds. Fertilize for the first time in the year

in the middle of February to the middle of March. The second time to fertilize is in May. Fertilize the third time immediately after the last hurricane goes by, which usually is like mid September or later. If you're fertilizing 5 times a year start in March and every 4 to 6 weeks thereafter until September. That will give you 5 applications 6 weeks apart. Never apply more than 50 pounds of fertilizer to a mature tree in a year, which is a lot of fertilizer. During the rainy season if the rains are heavy, Dr Futch recommends not fertilizing because fertilizer is so leachable and may leach below the root level. When fertilizing, spread it on the soil from the trunk of the tree out beyond the drip line. Evenly broadcast the fertilizer so all roots have a chance to benefit from the fertilizer. If any suckers sprout from below the graft union they should be trimmed off flush with the trunk of the tree. Keep the grass away from the trunk of the tree so that there's no chance of damage with the lawn mower or string trimmer.

Dr Futch explained the meaning of seedless citrus fruit. Any fruit that has 6 or less seeds is considered seedless. Any fruit with more than 6 seeds is seedy.

There is some variation of when various citrus trees ripen their fruit. With careful selection and two varieties one can get citrus ripening from November all the way through July, for example with a Hamlin and a Valencia. If you only have room for one tree, you can graft on a Hamlin on one side and a Valencia on the other side.

Dr Futch went on to show slides of a great variety of citrus: grapefruit, oranges, tangerines, lemons, limes and a variety of crosses such as tangelos and tangors and murcott.

He discussed a variety of insect pests. The rust mite which is very tiny, red, kind of wedge shaped, 8 legs which is typical of mites. To find these little critters on a fruit, you will probably have to use a magnifying glass. The rust mite causes damage to the exterior surface of the fruit itself normally on the bottom in the shade of the fruit. A

variety of different kinds of spider mites tend to infect the leaves rather than the fruit so much. A bad infestation can cause the leaves to desiccate and turn brown because the spider mites remove so much moisture from the leaves. Citrus snow scale forms on the trunk of the trees. If you suspect you have snow scale covering the bark of a tree, use an old toothbrush to clean off a spot on the trunk; come back in 4 to 6 weeks and see if those little white specks have moved back into the cleaned area. If they have, you have a pretty active population of snow scale so control may be warranted. There are some biological controls for snow scale so it is recommended to use something like Safers soap which won't impact the biological control so much, instead of malathion to control the scale. The Caribbean black scale is frequently controlled by natural biological

controls. Florida red scale is a conical shaped scale. It attacks fruit but is normally kept under control by beneficial insects. Aphids are little critters that attack new tender leaves. There are 3 or 4 kinds of aphids in Florida that feed on new growth and distort the leaves. Here again an insecticidal soap like Safers works very well to control the aphids. Citrus leaf miner is similar to leaf miners that get on tomatoes. The female lays her eggs on newly emerging leaves where the insect penetrates the leaf surface and damages the leaf. For this pest there is not much that can be done. Citrus scab, which is a raised lesion, looks like a little wart. To control scab, spray with copper. Scab is a major problem on Temple oranges.

* * * *

WHAT'S HAPPENING

Jul-Aug 2001

by PAUL ZMODA

I feel like the industrious ant in the fairy tale: work-work-work! It never ends but I always try to get ahead. Collecting seeds is done for now; the rainy season can ruin some seeds so it's important to keep them dry if that's what they require, such as for bean or herb seeds. Others need to be stratified (cold-treated) so into the refrigerator they go, wrapped in moist paper towels in a plastic bag.

I've planted dozens of American persimmon seeds, wild plum seeds and some peach palm seeds. From the rooting boxes, I have potted up dozens of pomegranates, olives, hibiscus, grapes, Arabian tea and lots of "odds 'n' ends" like night-blooming jasmine, porterweed and others.

Some air layers have rooted well so they have been cut free and potted in a peat moss/compost mix. Many seedlings had been begging for their own space so lots of sugar apples, soursops, pummelos, lemons and sunquats now have their own pots in which to grow.

New plantings: okra, calabasa, sweet potatoes, tobacco.

MEMBERS' CORNER

Wanted: Hardy avocado fruit/seeds/budwood of survivors in your area. These typically Mexican race fruit are small, colored black or green, possibly purple. The leaves smell of anise when crushed. Fruit size & flavor are unimportant to me, typically they run small or very small, rarely as big as a grocery store Hass variety.

Also **Wanted:** Wild grapes, bunch or muscadine.

Art Hedstrand
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From the President
Jimmy Lee

A huge **THANK YOU** to Rose Terenzi, Jim & Iris Stout, Bob Heath, Al Hendry, Jon Kolb, Thom Scott, Phil Brown, Paul Zmoda, Al & Pat Jean, Paul Branesky, Norwood Smith, Charles & Linda Novak, Sharon Pilot, Lillian Stark, Sal Russo, Susan and Shawn McAveety, George Riegler, John Stonehouse, Robin Musolino, Michele Lee, Peggy & Carl Mann, Charley Crowley, Hue & Raffina Dindial and any other club members who helped at the USF Tropical Plant Fair.

A special **Thank You** to Al & Dottie Ebanks for their generous donation of grapes and figs for this event. The ladies who baked the delicious samples for the tasting plates are to be commended for a job well done. Also **Thanks** to Wendel Martinovic for his monetary donation to the club (as he was unable to help at this event). If you have never been involved in a USF Plant sale it is hard to visualize the work required and we are indebted to many of our members for the hours they spent working on this event.

We have a good thing going and will continue to grow if members will add their ideas and work in the spirit of cooperation. Let's work together to make the club even better. Remember, 'together we aspire and together we achieve' and 'united we are strong and divided we are weak'. So, fellow club members, let's be united.

Scheduled Programs:

August 12	Katie Roberts-Edible Landscaping
September 9	Picnic & grafting workshops (Tentative) Bring your budwood and rootstock.
October 13-14	USF Fall Plant Sale
November 11	Protecting your tropical fruit plants from freezing temperatures. Invite your interested friends and neighbors.
December 9	Holiday social

If you know of someone who could present a program of interest to our council members, please let me know. We need speakers for the next year.

Please continue to donate your extra plants to the plant exchange and contribute to the tasting table. Your donations are very much appreciated.

TASTING TABLE: JULY

Pat Jean	Blueberry Muffins	Musgraves	Chocolate Cake
Thom Scott	Genip (Spanish lime)	Fred Roush	Lychees
Rich Parker	Mango (Marilyn)	Barbara Dalrymple	Cookies
Linda Long	Blueberry Cobbler	Vern Reddicliffe	Razzleberry Pie
Rose Terenzi	Pepperoni Bread, Pepperoni & Cheese Slices, Pesto Salad		
Jan Elliot	Pork & Rice with Orange Cumin Vinaigrette		
Sally Lee	Mango Crisp, Blueberry Bread, Sweet Potato Bread, Zucchini Muffins, Orange juice, Lime juice		
Novak	Mango cheesecake squares, fresh tropical fruit tray, banana-chocolate chip-coconut bread, juices		

And other delectable edibles not listed on the signup sheet. **Thanks to everyone who contributed to the tasting table. Please continue to donate.** Members who contribute to the tasting table may receive a free plant exchange ticket.

A VISIT with WAYNE SHERMAN

by Art Hedstrand

The Tropical Fruit Club of Central Florida and guest Spring Hill Rare Fruit Council were privileged to have a tour of Dr Wayne Sherman's peach & plum breeding orchard at the University of Florida, Gainesville. We met at 3:00 pm on May 18. When Wayne drove up in his pickup he told me he had been out in the orchard all week at 6:00 am to pick his peach crop. The season was early this year so we missed tasting some varieties.

After admonitions not to snip any budwood or pick any fruit unless ok'd by Wayne, we proceeded into the orchard. The breeding program exists in great part on royalties from patented peach and plum cultivars that they develop. The fruit have to be left on the trees for evaluation including count as to productivity.

Warning: Peach stains won't come out of clothes!

The first fruit we observed was the Indian Blood peach, originally from the mountains of Georgia, North Carolina & surrounding area. This cultivar requires 450 chilling hours to fruit. Wayne reduced the chilling from the parents' 1200 hours.

Second was a white peach: the specific genes here delete color. The white skin was very unappealing to me, as was the pure white flesh.

To develop a cultivar requires 3 years through one generation and 2 years of field testing, for a total of 8-10 years. (This is rather disconcerting for those of us in the 70's or more - you younger members need to start now! Not that I don't intend to breed persimmons, hardy avocados and calabaza squash.)

When Wayne pointed out the third cultivar to me, I exclaimed 'a peento!' I had never seen one, but had read several articles in Pomona through the years. I believe Northwinds Nursery has a picture of one. This fruit is shaped like a doughnut without the hole and has a short stem, slapping it right up

against the branch. Wayne's cultivar is "UFO" and I believe released 2 years ago. It has a firm chewy texture which is termed "non-melting flesh" as contrasted with "melting flesh", the typical fruit with which we are familiar. Wayne prefers a fruit with substance but I found it so firm I had to slice subsequent samples very thinly and still had difficulty chewing them.

In response to a question about fertilization, Wayne said a large tree receives 7 lbs. of a complete 10-10-10 fertilizer per year, applied in February, June & August. A lot of zinc is necessary, as is magnesium.

As to pruning, in January cut out the center of a young tree to establish 3-4 scaffolds in a vase shape. This open form is necessary to bring maximum light into the tree for fruit coloring and ripening.

Next was Sun Home nectarine - the most popular tree with homeowners, partly due to its red leaves.

Peach seeds contain cyanide but it is not harmful to humans as we do not have the enzyme necessary to break it down. This is related to the cyanide in apple seeds which if ingested in large quantities can produce severe headaches at the least. I believe J.I. Rodale, founder of Organic Gardening & Prevention Magazines, found this out personally.

Wayne said the original Elberta peach is extremely bitter, inedible; commercial varieties of Elberta are not Elberta.

Florida Prince and Tropic Beauty are two of the best peaches, both non-melting flesh.

Florida Belle, an excellent cultivar, has green in its ground color, so under fluorescent lights in supermarkets it doesn't appear red - the kiss of death, evidently. It has a small seed, a good attribute.

The next cultivar was a "brackiated

dwarf' which has a single gene for compact growth. UF 2000 is in the process of being released. It has non-melting flesh.

The object of non-melting flesh is obviously the ability to withstand handling during shipping. An added benefit: fruit may be picked at a riper stage than the melting flesh types so better flavor should be evident.

Root stocks used in the peach program and commercially are Floridaguard, Nemagard and Okinawa.

We next headed over to the plum orchard where there was an unnamed cultivar Wayne keeps because it's his mom's favorite. Mom has good taste - this is a good fruit (of course, being super ripe didn't hurt a bit in my evaluation!).

I recall on an earlier visit Wayne expressed disappointment that Gulf Gold and Gulf Ruby were released because they had disease problems; Gulf Gold is subject to leaf scorch and Gulf Ruby to bacterial spot canker.

He demonstrated the need to thin fruit: a couple of plum trees had totally collapsed under the fruit load.

Next was the latest release Gulf Rose, affectionately termed 'pig blood' because of its intense flesh color. Gulf Rose is good and it produces from Immokalee to South Georgia!

Gulf Blaze, the next specimen, is a big plum. This block was owned by another organization, possibly USDA, so we couldn't go near it. It was heart warming to see really large plums in Florida.

Misc. comments:

Prune plums have 6 sets of chromosomes, which accounts for their dryness.

UF plums are on Floridaguard rootstock.

In reply to my question about the possibility of adapting the wonderful California plums to Florida, Wayne said he's working on it and sounded optimistic!

Wayne has a personal project he's started to produce hardy citrus, with a target of 12°F. "When using trifoliolate for cold tolerance, can you remove the obnoxious trifoliolate flavor?" "Not hard to do" - Wayne.

There was a row of Cherry of the Rio Grande which was hurt in varying degrees by a 16°F freeze this winter but subsequently fruited.

A nearby patch of Jujube exhibited the typical forests of root sprouts.

There were 2 large 40+ year old trees of Myrica Rubra of the Myrtle family, origin South Carolina & Japan. These are a curiosity only - no plan to develop.

There were huge crops of small fruits of not wonderful taste, supposedly good for jelly. (Is anything not "good for jelly"??) Nice specimen trees related to bayberries.

This was a pretty fast tour. Wayne said he'd be back Saturday morning at 6 a.m. to pick fruit.

We are fortunate to have a person with such dedication to and love of his work of fruit breeding. Wayne Sherman is a gem.

The trend in this country is to wipe out fruit breeding programs and to throw money at garbage such as the Cuban sugar monopoly at Lake Okeechobee, wheat ranches in Montana and price supports for milk overproduction with bovine growth hormone, ad nauseum.

A visit with Wayne Sherman makes life seem more worthwhile.

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JOKE: What is an oddball extraterrestrial?

Answer: A Star Fruit.

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GRAFTING KNIVES AND PARAFILM FOR GRAFTING: There are some grafting knives and rolls of Parafilm available to club members. If interested, please contact Charles Novak at (813)754-1399 or c.novak@worldnet.att.net

PLANT LOCATOR DEPARTMENT

Sally Lee at 813-982-9359 is still waiting for your call if you're trying to locate seeds or a plant that you haven't been able to find locally. Sally will tap the most knowledgeable members of the Club in central Florida and other chapters in Miami, Orlando, Manatee, etc. to find the plant for you.

PROGRAM SPEAKERS

Finding interesting and informative speakers for Club meetings is an ongoing problem and taxes the abilities of the program chairman to keep us entertained and informed. Jimmy Lee, in addition to being president, is also our program chairman and has been doing an excellent job. However, he is open to suggestions and would very much appreciate names of people he could contact for future meetings. Please contact him at 813-982-9359 with suggestions.

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