



NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2003

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

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PRESIDENT: JIM LEE

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

NEXT MEETING: JANUARY 12

PROGRAM: OUR PROGRAM THIS MONTH SHOULD BE EXTREMELY INTERESTING & INFORMATIVE. CHRIS ROLLINS, who is director of the Fruit & Spice Park in Homestead FL, will present a program on the fruits of S.E. Asia. The rain forest of S.E. Asia, like the rain forest of South America, is rich in diversity of plant life & animal life. A great variety of fruiting trees grow there and have been cultivated for many years. We will meet at 2:00 in our regular meeting place @ USF in the WCC Building, Westside Conference Center (see map page 03-3). We will also have our fabulous tasting table & exciting raffle. Bring something to the meeting and enjoy.

WHAT'S HAPPENING

Dec-Jan 2003

by Paul Zmoda

This past summer we never got any wild bolete mushrooms from our lawn. We are, however, getting to harvest some delectable puffball mushrooms lately. Puffballs are those well-known spheres which grow on the ground, usually in full sunlit areas. Pure white inside, when sliced and fried in butter, provide a tasty treat. These puffballs left to mature "in situ" become brownish sacs of billowing spores if one steps on them.

Pruning time is upon us. I have begun to prune trees & vines as they go dormant - that is - to drop all their leaves. American persimmons become bare quite early so can be pruned, if needed, then.

Olive trees received a high nitrogen fertilization in December just in time for 3.7" of rain the day after the wonderful Christmas party. This treatment is supposed to promote flowering in the springtime.

Our single plant of roselle, or Jamaican sorrel is providing a huge crop of brilliant, red calices suitable for making drinks and a nice batch of ruby red jelly for Christmas gift-giving.

Our Chinese broccoli is making beautiful heads for constant eating. All winter vegetables get occasional doses of fish emulsion fertilizer. This stuff really works!

I found a new, tiny fruit on our jakfruit tree and the white sapote is now loaded with flower buds.

New plantings: Beets, chard, lettuces, pac choy and dwarf Cavendish banana.

DECEMBER PLANT EXCHANGE

Plant	Donor	Winner
Margarita Sw. Potato (11)	Ed Musgrave	?
Stick Tree	"	?
Longan	Pat McGauley	Eunice U.
Cardamon	"	?
Bromeliad	Verna Dickey	?
"	"	N Gasperment
Pink Penta	"	?
Baby Bamboo	Paula & Bob Hughes	Robert Harris
Ornamental	Zmoda	?
Pomegranate	"	Magella Kirby
" (2)	"	?
Pineapple (2)	Thom Scott	?
Sugar Apple	John Braden	Lawrence C.
3 O'Clock Flower (3)	"	?
Philippine Oregano	Heath	Julie Woofter
Papaya	"	?
Loquat	"	Ron Watkins
Passion Fruit	"	Pat McGauley
Pineapple	"	Kareem Kirby
Tamarind	"	Gini Watkins
Eugenia Confusa	"	?
Beauty Berry	"	?
Rangoon Creeper	"	?
Day Lily	Watkins	Paul Zmoda
Corrol Plant	Beth Rediccliffe	J. Murrie
"	"	N. Gasperment
"	"	Sharon Pilot
2 Bags Flame Red Grapefruit	"	?
Burdekin Plum	Charles Novak	Kendall Reed
"	"	Chantal Kirby
"	"	Musgrave
"	"	John Braden
Bougainvillea	Robert Harris	?
Cavendish Banana	"	Luisa Zmoda
Grapefruit (3)	Al Roberts	?
Banana	Bonnie Ward	Ed Walsh
Navel Oranges	Al Roberts	?
Loquat	Marie Palis	?
Pineapple	Tess & Deven Anthony	?
Night Blooming Cereus	"	Silvia Nehmad
Bromeliad	"	Marilyn Weekley
Surinam Cherry	"	?
Filus Blue Pepper	Sharon Pilot	M. Branesky
"	"	Mike L.
"	"	Paul Branesky
"	"	Gil Vingilio
Lemon Grass	?	Myra Leavitt
Sweet Potato	?	Paul Zmoda

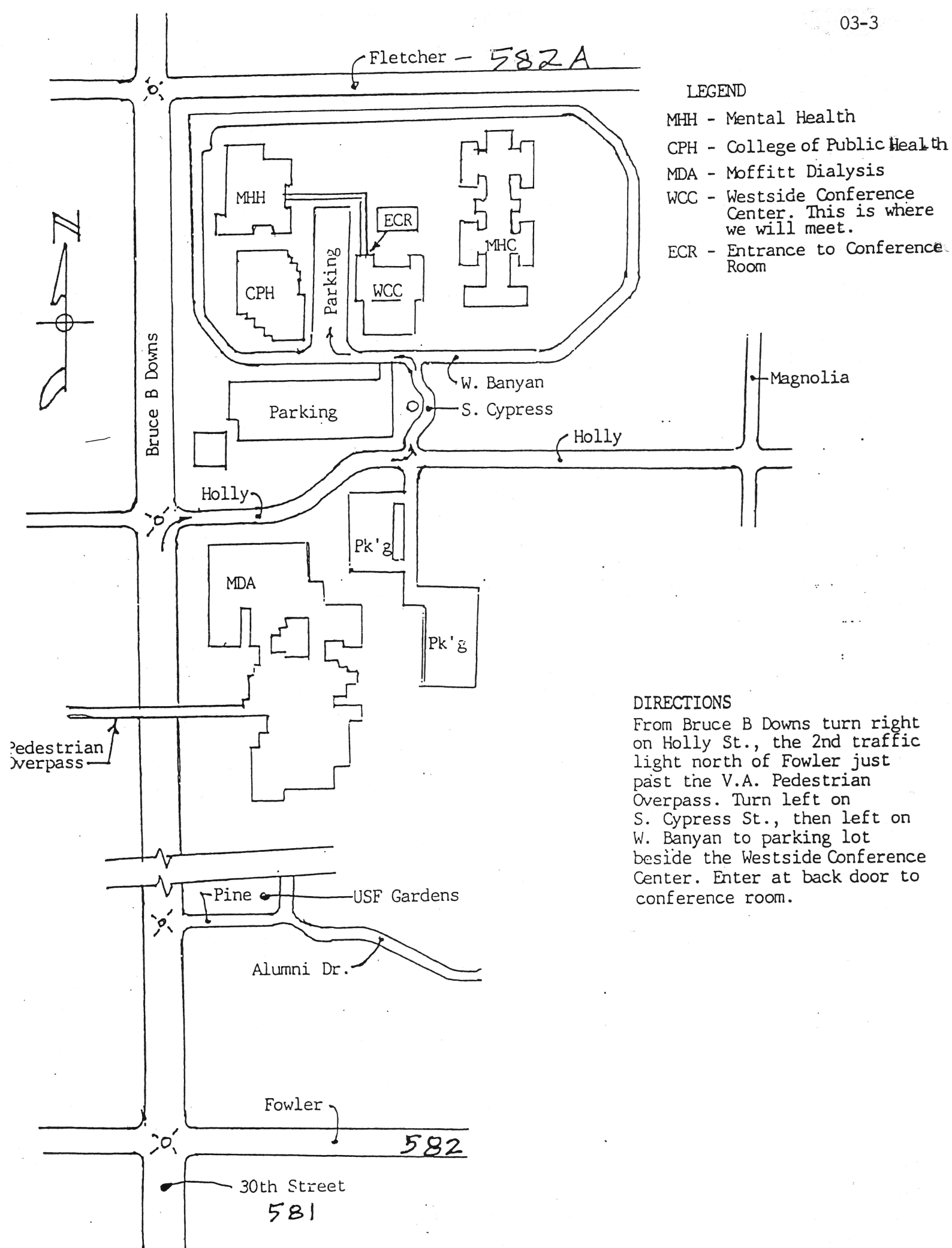
New Members:

Aurore & Lawrence Cerge

Riverview, FL

MHH - Mental Health
CPH - College of Public Health
MDA - Moffitt Dialysis
WCC - Westside Conference
Center. This is where
we will meet.
ECR - Entrance to Conference
Room

From Bruce B Downs turn right on Holly St., the 2nd traffic light north of Fowler just past the V.A. Pedestrian Overpass. Turn left on S. Cypress St., then left on W. Banyan to parking lot beside the Westside Conference Center. Enter at back door to conference room.



Holiday Social

Over 100 members and family attended the December 8 Holiday Social at the Creighton Farm. **THANKS** to members Burns and Kathy Creighton for hosting this event for the fourth year at their wonderful farm in Lithia. The festivities were held in their recently completed large barn (complete with kitchen, bathroom, three television sets-great for Karaoke and keeping an eye on the Bucs game, and many other amenities). Guests were treated to a tour of the beautiful Creighton home. A big **Thank You** to everyone for bringing the delicious food and wine; and for the plants, fruits and gifts for the free raffle. The weather was perfect and everyone had a great time!

Board of Directors Election in March: Please give some thought to serving on the Board of Directors. Directors serve a one-year term and will assume their respective offices immediately after the March meeting. The Board meets monthly or at such times deemed necessary. The Board of Directors is responsible for the policies, finances and direction of the Chapter. Any member who is interested in serving on the Board of Directors should contact a member of the Nominating Committee: Sally Lee (813) 982-9359 or Walt Yoblonski (813) 633-7754. The list of candidates will be published in the March newsletter and will be presented at the March meeting. Additional nominations may be presented from the floor. The Board of Directors will be elected at the March meeting by a majority vote of the general membership present and voting.

Scheduled Programs/Events:

January 12: Chris Rollins, Director of the Fruit & Spice Park in Homestead, FL, will present a program on *the Fruits of Southeast Asia*.

February 6-17: Florida State Fair.

February 9: Citrus Tasting at the Florida State Fair.

CITRUS TASTING AT THE FLORIDA STATE FAIR: Sunday, February 9, 2003.

This is our second year hosting this event. It was very popular with the public last year. Approximately 1,000 enthusiastic people took advantage of the opportunity to sample the fruits-many of which they had never seen or tasted. **Please plan to help with this event.** We need your help to make this event a success. We will need volunteers to pick fruit and to prepare the fruit for sampling. A signup sheet will be available at the January meeting; or you may contact Charles Novak (813) 754-1399, Bob Heath (813) 289-1068 or Sally & Jim Lee (813) 982-9359 to volunteer or if you have questions.

Also, please contact Charles, Bob or Jim if you can donate citrus fruit for this event. There will be more information in the February newsletter. Thanks for all your help.

HORTICULTURE DISPLAY AT THE FLORIDA STATE FAIR: February 6-17, 2003. We need members to man the club's horticulture display. Free fair admission tickets will be given to members who man the exhibit for a few hours. A signup sheet will be available at the January 12 meeting; or contact Charles Novak (813) 754-1399 to volunteer.

Parafilm for grafting and grafting knives will be available for purchase by members at the January meeting; or contact Charles Novak (813) 754-1399.

EARTHWORMS - Nature's Rototiller

Most people probably think of earthworms only as fish bait but horticulturists and farmers have known their value to the soil for years. Earthworms, it is believed, were responsible for the Nile Valley's renowned fertility, producing over 100 tons of castings per acre each 6 months. Charles Darwin said he doubted any other animal has played such an important part in world history, saying, "All the fertile areas of this planet have at least once passed through the bodies of earthworms." It has been stated by one scientist that without worms, there would be no civilization, an unbelievable benefit from a tiny worm that crawls on its belly in the dirt.

The earthworm is unlike anything else found in nature and yet there are so many types that zoologists can't agree on how to classify them all. The ones we find in our garden and use for fishing are segmented worms, of which there are 9000 different species; but those we dig up in Florida are of two categories. Those in our top soil are the smaller shallow dwelling type that only live for 2 to 3 years. Nightcrawlers, the other species raised for fishing, can live up to 8 years. There are immense numbers of earthworms in the soil, up to a half million in an acre of fertile land. This is equal to more than 11 worms per square foot.

Earthworms have multiple hearts and except for this item, the worm is a surprisingly simple animal with no backbone, no lungs (it breathes through its skin) and no teeth. But simple as it is, there is no truth to the rumor that a worm will regenerate if it's cut in pieces. Actually, if you cut the tail off, the part beyond the digestive organs, the head half, will grow a new tail but the other end will die. The worm moves by flexing its body and sliding along forward or backward on the movable bristles that line its underside (yes, even worms have an underside). A coating of mucus helps it burrow through the soil and

forms a kind of glue to keep its tunnels intact. Worms' bodies are 80% water so they need plenty of moisture and will burrow as deep as 10' to find it, which is probably why they come to the earth's surface when it rains, although no one really knows the answer to that. Some people think they come to the surface so they won't drown, but there's plenty of oxygen in fresh rain water so that's not the reason.

The earthworms' primary interest to us as gardeners is their ability to improve soil fertility. If your soil has any organic matter, you can be sure there are earthworms in it and the more compost and organic mulch you use, the more worms will be in your soil. An abundance of earthworms is an indication the soil contains lots of organic matter and will be rich, healthy and well aerated. Earthworms improve the tilth of the soil and provide tunnels for good water dispersion. According to Dr Kladvko, an agronomy professor at Purdue University, earthworms provide better aeration, which can also be important for root growth. Likewise, worm castings disperse the nutrients in the soil so the plants can absorb them more easily. The castings make the soil rich and crumbly. They can be a gardener's best friend, mixing organic matter into the ground and making it easier to till. The castings also help prevent crusting and erosion. A healthy worm supply in one year can produce more than 5 tons of castings in an acre of gardens. When a lot of mulch is used, leaves and crop residue, earthworms will start immediately to disperse the organic material into the soil. They may not till the soil as well as a rototiller, but earthworms are certainly a lot less work for us. We all are likely to have earthworms even in our poorest soil; to get them to multiply, all we need is a plentiful food supply and a moist environment that is neither too cold nor too hot. All your garden waste should be passed through a chipper or mulcher or added to your compost pile. All this provides

food for the earthworm. Some organic fertilizers will also help the worms, but steer clear of ammonia based fertilizers. Ammonia fertilizer and many insecticides and fungicides are toxic to worms. In the unlikely event that your soil seems to be bereft of earthworms, buy some from a worm farmer. Worm growers will usually have the deeper burrowing nightcrawlers but

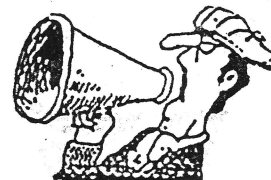
there are other worm farmers that practice vermiculture, the raising of worms in compost. If you decide to try vermiculture yourself, you might read Mary Applehof's book, "Worms Eat My Garbage" or Jerry Minnich's "The Earthworm Book" for information and tips you need to get started.

(Information gleaned from Country Magazine March 2002 issue)

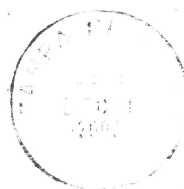
MEMBERS CORNER:

Wanted: Seeds or seedlings of the giant granadilla passion fruit.
Ed Musgrave 813-689-6139

Wanted: One-half to 5 gallon size drums. Charles Novak 813-754-1399



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FIRST CLASS MAIL



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