



# NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2003

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

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

NEXT MEETING: SEE BELOW (FEB. 9)

PROGRAM: OUR PROGRAM FOR SUNDAY FEB. 9 WILL BE OUR PARTICIPATION IN THE FLORIDA STATE FAIR where we will be conducting a CITRUS CELEBRATION & FRUIT TASTING. This is an urgent, important, critical affair for the Club, where our expertise will be exposed to the scrutiny of many thousands of people. If we do a good job, we will show them what a great organization the Rare Fruit Council of Tampa Bay really is and develop in people the importance of growing unusual fruit that we consider so interesting. On Saturday, Feb. 8 we will be picking & cleaning fruit at George Riegler's residence. For more information see comments below in the Fruit Tasting Event at Florida State Fair.

## Citrus Tasting Event at the Florida State Fair Sunday, February 9, 8:30AM – 4PM

We are busy making preparations for this event. Arrangements are being made to have available as many varieties of citrus as we can obtain. We will need members to help pick citrus, cut up fruit in sample size pieces on Sunday, answer questions from the public, and to help wherever needed.

**Thanks** to members who signed up to help with this event.

**Saturday – February 8, 9AM, Pick fruit at George Riegler's:** Members who plan to help pick fruit at George Riegler's should meet at George's place at 9AM. Bring your clippers and your appetite. Hamburgers, hotdogs, chips and drinks will be provided. Members may bring a side dish or dessert to share. For questions, directions or more information call Jim & Sally Lee (813) 982-9359, Charles Novak (813) 754-1399 or Bob Heath (813) 289-1068. SEE MAP PAGE 03-10.

**Sunday – February 9, 8:30AM – 4PM: Citrus Tasting at the Florida State Fair:** Members who are helping with the Citrus Tasting should plan to be at the Family Living Center Building a 8:30AM. We will be very busy as we start offering samples to the public at 10AM. We will contact members who have signed up to help with this event by phone, e-mail, etc. to arrange delivery of fair tickets and to advise of any new information about this event. Please call one of phone numbers in the previous paragraph if you have questions.

**Tampa Bay RFCI T-shirts:** A free club t-shirt to members who help at the State Fair Citrus Tasting – And have not already received a club t-shirt.

**Florida State Fair Horticulture Display:** February 6-17. If you would like to help man our exhibit please contact Charles Novak (813) 754-1399. Free fair tickets will be given to members who donate a few hours of their time talking with the public about growing rare and tropical fruit.

## From the President

### Jimmy Lee

It is good to be back after my absence due to business matters that needed my attention. We had an excellent turnout at the January meeting for Chris Rollins' presentation on "Fruits of Southeast Asia". Chris is one of our favorite speakers-even the Buccaneers' playoff game didn't keep our members away.

This next month will be a busy month for our club. The Citrus Fruit Tasting is on February 9 and the Horticulture Display runs from Feb. 6-17 at the Florida State Fair. Members are asked to help with collecting the fruit at George Riegler's on Saturday (the 8<sup>th</sup>) and to be at the Fairgrounds early on Sunday morning to cut up fruit and help where needed. Members are also asked to help man the club's exhibit during the duration of the fair. See this newsletter for more information on these events.

### Scheduled Programs/Events:

**February 6-17:** Florida State Fair  
**February 8:** Pick Citrus at George Riegler's  
**February 9:** Citrus Tasting at the Florida State Fair  
**March 9:** Jim Alderman, Jr., Dept. of Agriculture, "How Bees Pollinate"  
**April 12-13:** USF Botanical Garden Spring Plant Festival

We are in the process of scheduling speakers for the remainder of 2003. If you know of someone who would give a program of interest to our members, please contact me at (813) 982-9359.

### WHAT'S HAPPENING

#### Jan-Feb 2003

by Paul Zmoda

Happy New Year to all! Let's hope this is the year your special fruiting plant finally rewards you with a crop. In our last newsletter we learned about earthworms; the more you have, the better your soil. I've discovered one downside to having lots of worms - worm eaters! We are having a serious problem with raccoons, armadillos and gray foxes digging up our vegetables to feast on our precious earthworms on a nearly nightly basis. I trap and relocate at least one of these critters every couple of days - they just keep coming. Some of the largest raccoons are quite dangerous to handle and have been known to destroy my stainless steel live-traps designed for raccoons. They are also intelligent enough to sometimes steal the bait and not get caught. Armadillos, on the other hand, are quite dumb (I've actually caught one by hand) but make up for that by sneakiness.

I try to patrol my gardens every few hours during the night from dusk to 6:00 AM and rarely catch a culprit "in the act". Apparently all that mulch and manure is feeding not only plants.

The mango budwood distributed at the Christmas party was top-grafted to our Julie mango the following day and 100% success is evident: new light green buds are growing larger daily. The rest of the tree is pushing lots of new buds too.

New loquat top-grafts are flowering for the first time as the trees are also busy making new growth.

Our first Sanguinelli blood oranges ripened and they had splotches of red inside, reminding me of fertilized chicken egg yolks. The flavor was not very exciting, however. Sweet Siam pommelos are very juicy and delicious this year with not a hint of that - ahem - gastro-intestinal signature so often encountered. The jakfruit tree has another flower.

Pruning is about finished for now. The white sapote is absolutely loaded with flowers and tiny fruit. I can hardly wait to taste them.

New planting: Artichokes.

## JANUARY PLANT EXCHANGE

PLANT	DONOR	WINNER
Rose Apple	Heath	?
Pineapple	"	Sophia Gaponiuk
Naranjilla	"	T Scott
Rangoon Creeper	"	Ed Musgrave
Orange Berry	"	Sis Denson
Mamay Sapote	"	Jerry Amyot
Hawaiian Chestnut	"	Gene Crouch
Surinam Cherry	"	"
Passion Fruit	"	?
Beauty Berry	"	Yablonski
Fruit Basket	"	Marie Palis
Pineapple	W Yablonski	N McCormack
"	"	?
Purple Passion Fruit	"	Magella Kirby
Chaya (spinach)	Lee	Pat McGauley
Passion Fruit	"	Sophia Gaponiuk
"	"	Gene Crouch
"	"	Bob Heath
Mexican Pineapple	"	Steve M
"	"	Dougal K
"	"	Steve M
Citrus Seedling	"	Ed Musgrave
Banana - Orinoco	"	?
Mexican Petunia (2)	"	?
Wine Lily	"	Elaine Riegler
"	"	Verna Dickey
Surinam Cherry	Mann	Lucy Polak
"	"	Gini Watkins
"	"	Susan McAveety
Hanging Iris	Fred Engelbrecht	Karin Yoblonski
Guava tree	Pat McGauley	Steve B
Pineapple, abaca slips	Thom Scott	N McCormack
Pagoda flower	Sis Denson	Ginny Polak
"	"	McCormack
Miracle fruit	"	T Scott
Sugar Cane	"	B Creighton
Lipstick tree	"	?
Bromeliad	Tess & Deven Anthony	?
Aloe	"	?
Bromeliad	McCormack	?
Num Wah Banana	Sharon Pilot	Ginny Polak
Sugar Cane	Keith & Magella Kirby	?
Bromeliad	Judy Cimafranca	Eva Carmel
Bleeding Heart	"	Fred Engelbrecht
Jack Fruit	Charles Novak	Verna Dickey
Blueberry	"	?
Spanish Lime	"	Sis Denson
Burdekin Plum	"	Gene Crouch

**Board of Directors Election in March:** Any member who is interested in being on the Board of Directors should contact either Sally Lee (813) 982-9359 or Walt Yoblonski (813) 633-7754. Directors serve a one year term and will assume their respective offices immediately after the March meeting. The Board of Directors is responsible for the policies, finances and direction of this RFCI Chapter.

## FRUITS OF SOUTHEAST ASIA

by CHRIS ROLLINS

Chris is the curator at Fruit & Spice Park, which is a Miami-Dade County park. He's been there since 1944 every day except Christmas, talking to people about tropical fruit. The park was created in 1944 in the heart of the agricultural district of Miami-Dade County, which, despite what many people think, is an agricultural county. The county has miles & miles where every square foot has a nursery, a tropical fruit grove, winter vegetables, ethnic vegetables, tropical fish or some kind of agriculture going on; a very interesting place. For those who have not been down & might be interested, Chris brought some brochures. Last year they hosted the Rare Fruit Council conference with about 120 attendees from Florida & California. It was a lot of fun and the people were able to taste a lot of tropical fruit, such as jackfruit, that they may not have tasted before.

Tropical fruit of Southeast Asia is Chris's favorite subject and the area of the world is one he likes to go to best of all. Chris and his group have gone several times to Borneo, which is unique. More fruit originated there than anywhere else. All garcinias, durians and a number of lesser known fruiting plants originated in Borneo. There are over two dozen different species of durian growing in the jungle. It's just an incredible place and even the Amazon can't quite compare with Borneo. Southeast Asia really is a place to see a variety of fruit.

Chris started his display with a picture of various fruits they had gathered around the Fruit & Spice Park. They grow about 500 different varieties of tropical fruit, all of which are not bearing at one time of course. The display showed only a small portion of what is available throughout the year. Chris had a slide of citrus fruit and remarked that there are many rare and unusual citrus fruits growing in the Far East where citrus originated. Citrus was brought to the New World with the early explorers and spread throughout the Caribbean area where many different varieties got mixed up, producing citrus cultivars that have never existed in the Far East, an example

being the grapefruit, which appears to be some kind of sport from the pumelo. He also had several slides of citrus from the Far East virtually unknown in Florida.

Papayas are another well known fruit that are grown in the Far East & can be found everywhere in the world. Chris included them in the Asian fruit because they've been growing them for several hundred years and you can't convince Asians that it's not a native fruit. We usually consume our papayas ripe but around the world more are eaten green, cooked as vegetables and in other ways.

Chris had some slides of pineapples and he indicated that he liked to talk about pineapples because everyone knows them. Among the many travelers they meet in the Park are comments like, "You know the best pineapples are those grown in Thailand" or someone says, "you know the best pineapple is one grown in Korea or Puerto Rico" but the really best pineapple is the one that ripened in your own yard. Most U.S. citizens have never tasted one that ripened on the plant. It is at its best when it's completely ripe and still on the plant; that is the ideal time to cut it off and enjoy it. Pick them when they just smell like honey and are yellow and sweet and juicy like candy.

Chris showed us pictures of various mangos and indicated that those in Florida came from all parts of the world. They originated in Asia but when mangos spread throughout the world, varieties from various places ended up in south Florida. When we got them all in this one area, the pollen started spreading around and hybridizing occurred. Florida began to get mangos that don't exist anywhere else in the world. Chris indicated they have 114 varieties in the Park and it is his favorite fruit bar none.

The wax jambu is one of his favorites, not because of the quality of the taste but because the wax jambu is crunchy like an apple with a mild sweet flavor. Chris says you have to give the wax jambu a chance to grow on you. The tree



is a tough tree, bears like crazy & is beautiful with the red bell shaped fruit hanging on it. You can find the fruit in all the markets in Southeast Asia & they come in a variety of colors & shapes: red, white, purple, pink & striped.

Closely related to the wax jambu but of better taste is the Malay apple. It is also mild but has a much sweeter, zestier flavor. Bigger & just as pretty as the wax jambu and preceded by a very beautiful pink flower.

Related to these is the rose apple, which has the same crunch as the wax jambu but it tastes like a rose smells. It has a beautiful white flower & grows to as large as a ping pong or golf ball usually with one seed that is loose inside and rattles when it's shaken.

The sapodilla is a favorite fruit in Southeast Asia & is grown extensively there, although it's not native to the area. It is originally from Central America. The sapodilla tree is where chicle or chewing gum originally came from & trees were tapped for the white sap like we tap pine trees for turpentine. The sapodilla is one of the sweetest fruit, tastes like maple sugar candy. It has a kind of grainy texture & one variety is called Brown Sugar for obvious reasons.

The durian is called the king of fruits in Southeast Asia in distinction to the queen of fruit, the mangosteen. Chris brought a ripe durian for our tasting table so those who hadn't tasted it could try it. While he was talking, the fruit was being opened and cut up for serving and the aroma filled the entire auditorium, which one member described as a leaking gas line. The durian is one of the most unusual fruit. There is no more controversy, even in Asia, about a fruit than there is about durian. We eat the pulp inside around the seeds and it's like an oniony, almond custard, very, very rich. It's all you can take by itself; it's okay for milk shakes & ice creams but with durian you just eat it by itself. Durian seems to be the only fruit that jungle carnivores readily eat; tigers & other cats show an interest in durian. In the markets of Southeast Asia, if you're eating durian, it's not uncommon to have cats rubbing

up against your leg hoping for a hand-out. Durian goes into your body & seems to come out of your pores for 2 or 3 days; even your clothes begin to smell like durian. It smells like garlic, sulfur, onion & real strong bad cheese - what a combination! Strangely enough, when you get used to it, it becomes strangely enticing. There are durians without that strong flavor but they're not that good; the smell is part of it & they don't taste right without it. Additionally durians are believed to be an aphrodisiac & the saying in Southeast Asia is, "When the durians fall, the sarongs go up." The fruit rind is protected by wicked thorns and when you carry a durian, you have to carry it by the stem; otherwise you can't pick it up because of the thorns. Durians tend to drop from the trees at night so at night you don't want to be under a tree when the fruit might drop. The people in Asia like durians; all over Southeast Asia you'll find durian statues. This shows how much they like them.

Lychees. Almost everyone likes lychees the first time they eat one. There are about 600 acres of lychee trees in Dade County. The pearly white flesh inside has the texture of a peeled grape and a very sweet and aromatic flavor. It is a magnificent fruit, about 1" or 1½" in diameter; a prized fruit in Asia. In Thailand they have an annual Lychee Festival with lychee trees & fruit for sale. All lychee fruit are good but the Emperor lychee is probably the largest available. The Ha Kib is Chris's favorite lychee. He showed us slides of several different kinds of lychees & lychee trees in Thailand.

Rambutan is like a large lychee with projections on the surface. Rambutans are delicious and people like them as much as lychees & longans. One drawback is that the seeds stick to the flesh in the rambutan like in a cling peach. Rambutan means "hairy lychee" in Malay.

Pulisan is like a rambutan with a thick skin with blunt spines on it. Chris indicated that pulisan taste is superior to rambutan and maybe even to lychees, almost the size of a tennis ball & a very fine fruit. It has a thick skin and lovely flavor & texture but has to grow in almost rainforest climate, rich soil

and 100% humidity. Ripe fruit can be green, red, purple or black.

The longan is Chris's favorite fruit after mangos. It is easier to grow than the lychee. It has a more subtle flavor but if you eat too many, it's like eating candy after a while: too much sugar. They are sweet but not overpowering. Longans do very well in Florida. Chris showed us a net over a tree to keep the bats off in Borneo. They have fruit year round in Viet Nam.

The caimito, or star apple, is very popular in the Philippines and we are seeing it more often now in other Southeast Asian countries. It has an astringent purple rind and a delicious, fruiting, melon like center.

A fruit often confused with the star apple but more desirable, is the mangosteen. It is a jungle rain forest fruit: rich soil, 100% humidity, no wind, some shade, perfect conditions for growing mangosteen. The rind stains red and many hotels won't allow the mangosteen in the rooms because they don't like the red circles on their linen and tablecloths from people setting a sliced mangosteen on a table or bed. It has a segmented interior almost like a tangerine with a mother-of-pearl center, wonderful melting texture and delicious sweet juicy flavor. It is a wonderful fruit but Chris still rates the mango No. 1.

Jackfruit is the biggest cultivated tree fruit in the world; 80 lbs or more for a single fruit. They cut it up & sell it in the market in pieces; nobody buys a complete jackfruit. Jackfruit has a skin that looks like alligator hide & large seeds about an inch in diameter and each seed is surrounded by sweet chewy aromatic flesh. Chris described it as a combination of banana, cantaloupe and juicy fruit gum. He says they have a tree at the Park which he believes is the best in the world. It has a bright red color and a great texture, crunchy and with a wonderful cantaloupe-banana-juicy fruit flavor. The typical jackfruit has a core and 200 to 300 seeds with an envelope of flesh around each one. The outer layers of the jackfruit have a lot of latex in it. When you open a jackfruit, you should

wear surgical gloves or rub your hands with vegetable oil so the latex won't get under your fingernails and all over your fingers. The pulp of the green jackfruit is cooked with coconut milk and served as a vegetable. The seeds are eaten roasted like chestnuts.

The champedek is a fruit with extremely rich pulp, so rich in fact, that Chris says he can hardly gag it down because of the richness. To clean it, you just slit the skin and peel it back and the whole fruit opens up for you.

Breadfruit grows all over Hawaii but other than that state, the very south part of Florida, the Keys, is the only place the breadfruit will grow. Breadfruit is a fruit that should be cooked; it's not eaten raw. The fruit that has seeds is called a breadnut; the seedless one is called breadfruit. The breadfruit played an important part in the story of "The Mutiny on the Bounty". Breadfruit originated in Southeast Asia and spread throughout the islands to Hawaii over about a thousand year period.

The bael fruit is a citrus relative known to Southeast Asia, particularly India, Ceylon & Pakistan. It is a round fruit, hard like a gourd; inside the shell is the flesh & seeds. It tastes like citrus, oil, flour & honey mixed. It's mostly used as a breakfast fruit.

The santol is well known in the Philippines & Thailand. It grows in south Florida & in the Fruit & Spice Park. It has a shell-like skin and inside is a white kind of fluffy, juicy, textured pulp. It's a nice fruit but nothing really special.

Otaheite gooseberry makes a sour fruit loaded with Vitamin C about the size of a Surinam cherry but green. Despite its sour taste, it makes a very good pink jelly. In the summer here in Florida it puts on fruit in a prodigious manner covering the limbs & main branches with great quantities of little fruit.

Chris showed us several slides of the markets in the southeast - Saigon, Bangkok and several others, with every imaginable type of fruit native to the area.

## Tasting Table: January 2003

Yoblonski: 3-bean Turkey &amp; Sausage Chili

Jan Elliot: Peanut Sticks

Lillian Smoleny: Lemon Coconut Bars

Boyettes: Apple Pie

Bonnie Ward: Key Lime Bars

Marie Palis: Roasted Green Beans

G. &amp; R. Watkins: Lemon Snaps

MaryAnn Branesky: Philippine Chicken Rice Soup

Judy Cimafranca: Seafood Spread &amp; Tortilla Chips

Rose Terenzi: Cranberry Pudding Cake, Pumpkin Cake Roll with Cream Cheese Filling

Sally &amp; Jim Lee: Singapore Noodles, Avocado Salad, Philippine Papaya, Fried Rice, Zechuan Chicken

Linda Novak: Guava Cake, Mango Upside-down Cake, Fresh Fruit Platter, Apricot Cookies, Juices

Zmoda: Whole, Ripe Durian

Cathy Creighton: Guava Pudding

Musgraves: Melon Bowl

Coronel: Cranberry Pudding

Thom Scott: Peanut Butter Fudge

Pat McGauley: Spanish Squash Candy

Tess &amp; Devon Anthony: Guava Cake

Paul Branesky: Sweet Potato Stew

THANKS for all the delicious contributions to the Tasting Table. It was *Fabulous*, as always. Each person or family who brings a dish for the tasting table receives one free ticket for the plant exchange.

**RECIPE OF THE MONTH: Tropical Kumquat Cake (Linda Novak)**

3 eggs

2 cups sugar

1 cup oil

3 cups flour

2 tsp baking soda

1 tsp salt

1 tsp cinnamon

1½ cups chopped kumquats

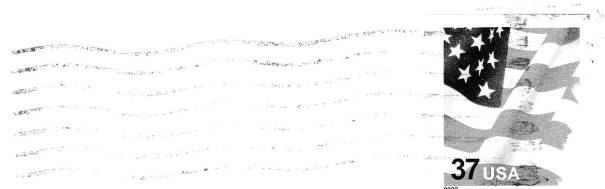
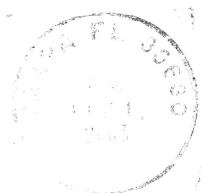
1 cup chopped nuts

1 20 oz can crushed pineapple (well drained)

a few chopped maraschino cherries

In a bowl beat the eggs, sugar & oil. Fold in dry ingredients and mix well. Add kumquats, nuts, pineapple & cherries. Pour into a greased & floured 10" tube pan. Bake 1 hour & 15 min. in a 350° oven. Cool, remove from pan.

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