



# NEWSLETTER

JULY 2003

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

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PRESIDENT: JAMES LEE

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

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

NEXT MEETING: JULY 12 & 13 (SEE BELOW)

PROGRAM: OUR PROGRAM THIS MONTH WILL BE PARTICIPATION IN THE US F 2003 TROPICAL PLANT FAIR (SEE BELOW). Of course there will be no tasting table or plant raffle. However, you may bring fruiting plants to the sale. Remember, FRUITING PLANTS only. See restrictions below.

## U S F 2003 TROPICAL PLANT FAIR

The RFCI will be participating for the third time in the annual Tropical Plant Fair on July 12 & 13. This sale will be similar to the Spring & Fall Plant Festivals in which we normally participate, except that it 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 the sale a success. We will be in a different location than we normally are at the Spring and Fall Plant Fairs, but the same area we were in a year ago. 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 11, raising tents, setting up tables, arranging plants and posters till about 6:00 pm. On Saturday, July 12, 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 Saturday & Sunday. The Festival will end at 4:00 pm on Saturday & 3:00 pm on Sunday.

Club members who participate are allowed to bring plants for sale, but you must remain for all of 2 days and are individually responsible for the sale and collection of money from your own plants, 30% of which will go to the Rare Fruit Council Intl. No manifest will be necessary except for your own use, as we will not be set up to handle your sales. Bear in mind also that some of our customers are going to want to provide us with checks.

We will not have ID cards for RFCI works available at this Sale. Tell the gate that you are an RFCI worker. If you are refused admittance, someone from our group will vouch for you to gain your admittance. Price for admission is \$3.00 otherwise.

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

### New Members:

Charles Delp  
Ian Greig

Tampa  
Tampa

Lourdes Cordero  
Shirley Quenan

Tampa  
Tampa

## JUNE PLANT EXCHANGE

Plant	Donor	Winner
Papaya	Heath	Walt Yoblonski
Passion Fruit	"	Hill
Loquat	"	Gonzalez
Pineapple	"	Shirley Quenan
"	"	Tess Anthony
"	"	B J Vosburgh
"	"	?
Ph. Oregano	"	Ludwig
Chaya Spinach	Pat McGauley	?
Passion Fruit	"	Marv Hymes
Cardamom	"	?
Papaya	"	P Ludwig
Pineapple Slip	Tom Scott	Tess Anthony
"	"	Bob Heath
Aloe	Bill	?
Anaheim Pepper	T Scott	Lanny Brooks
"	"	Marv Hymes
Papaya Red Lady	Fred Engelbrecht	?
Basil	Robert Harris	Aurora Walker
"	"	?
"	"	?
Tarragon	"	B J Vosburgh
"	"	?
Parsley	"	B J Vosburgh
"	"	?
Red Bromeliad	Verna Dickey	Ed Walsh
Papaya	John Gibson	?
Black Surinam Cherry	Novak	Jeannie ?
"	"	W Yoblonski
"	"	B J Vosburgh
"	"	Charlie Loenichen
"	"	?
Chayote Plant	Lee	J Murrie
"	"	R Smeelink
"	"	E Musgrave
"	"	?
"	"	Maria Hong
"	"	Leo Bruder
"	"	Creighton
"	"	Bob Heath
Tomato Fruit	"	Ed Walsh
"	"	B J Vosburgh
"	"	Fred Engelbrecht
"	"	B J Vosburgh
"	"	Bob Heath
"	"	?
Cuban Red Banana	J Murrie	Steven Branesky
Peruvian Cactus	Zmoda	Brosh
Hummingbird Vine	Hill	Jeannie
Ivy	Parker	?
Yellow Passion Fruit	Jim Stout	Pat McGauley
"	"	Lourdes Cordero
"	"	Hill
"	"	?
"	"	?
Praying Hands Banana	Susan McAveety	Bill Marler

## June Plant Exchange continued

Plant	Donor	Winner
Plantain	Susan McAveety	?
Crimson Lilies	Judy Cimafranca	Verna Dickey
"	"	Robert Harris
Pink Pomelo	"	Logan
"	"	Harris
Sago Palm	"	Lisa Ghalayini
Ube	Marie Hong	Janet Valadie
"	"	Pat McGauley
Surinam Cherry	Tess & Deven Anthony	?
Jamaican Papaya	Dr T Talacay	Fred Engelbrecht
Surinam Cherry	Anthony	Charlie Loenichen
"	"	Shaun Chung
"	"	B J Vosburgh
Jamaican Papaya	Talacay	Ken Walker
Acacia	B J Vosburgh	Fred Engelbrecht
Fresh Flowers	"	Alma Greig
Ube	Marie Hong	Annette Fairchild

## WHAT'S HAPPENING

Jun-Jul 2003

by PAUL ZMODA

Weed control is a summer project for me; trying to keep the areas beneath our trees clear of dollar weed, St Augustine grass and others is a concern, for they can rob nutrients and keep citrus trunks moist, which is bad for them. Some studies have shown that allowing alfalfa to grow around avocados is beneficial; however, I prefer clean cultivation and lots of mulch.

On May 18 I went to the Manatee Rare Fruit Council's tree sale and saw lots of nice specimens and talked to old friends. Sarasota's sale is coming up Sept. 28 so don't miss it. Our own club will participate in the University of South Florida's Tropical Plant Sale July 12 & 13 so prepare to find your rare fruit trees then.

I've found a new source of horse manure so I've been stocking up. Most trees also got a 10-10-10 fertilizer and many, including all citrus and grapes, got treated to magnesium sulfate (epsom salt) which is available at supermarkets and drug stores where it is more economical to purchase than at plant shops.

Our grape growing friend, Mr D.D. Smith, has a very nice home vineyard right in central Tampa! He showed me around while I observed muscadine & bunch grapes growing some terrific looking crops. I've been doing quite a bit of research on growing wine grapes here in west central Florida.

Our chickasaw plum variety "Guthrie" gave us three fruits this spring. At 1-1/16" and yellow in color with a blush of red, they were firm, sweet and flavorful, unlike the type-species, which is smaller and quite tart.

I noticed several chestnuts have formed on the Dunstan hybrid tree. About time.

I grafted a new pommelo called "Pink Sensation". The tree, now 3 feet tall, is growing quite well. Pink Sensation is a pear shaped citrus fruit, pink inside, and is of high quality. RFCI member Alan Smith of Largo, FL, is the hybridizer of this excellent fruit.

New plantings: Avocado, Lychee, Gingko, Cactus.

## PINEAPPLES

by Ian Greig

Ian Greig has a degree in subtropical agronomy and went to work for Dole Fruit Company in 1973, where he was involved in pineapple production and experimentation. In 1995 he started his own consulting firm where he's been working ever since. Recently, he settled in Tampa and is growing a few pineapples on his own property, so he spoke to us as a homeowner with a talk aimed more to the home grower.

The first slide he showed was a pineapple plant which he intended to use for the terminology. The top or crown of the pineapple grows on top of the fruit. Immediately below the fruit may be a sprout called a slip. The sprouts at the bottom where the main plant is are called suckers. Below the plant will be the first year plant, from which this second year plant originated as a sucker.

The next slide was an actual photograph of a pineapple plant which had been removed from the ground to show the roots of the plant and the pineapple itself. This particular plant had two suckers at the ground level, a hapa sprout which grows on the fruit stem, or peduncle, about half way up to the fruit, a slip coming out immediately below the fruit itself and the crown. Ian wanted to emphasize that the pineapple plant is very environmentally aware. It is extremely affected by the area in which it is grown. Two pineapples of the same variety grown in different places in the world can look entirely different.

The pineapple is in the bromeliad family, a bromeliad that has adapted to growing in the soil rather than in the trees. The pineapple plant is very resistant to drought. In a drought, the most notable change is the color of the leaves, where the leaves lose their chlorophyll and become yellow. The purpose of the chlorophyll is to absorb the light from the sun. Under drought conditions, the plant wants to absorb as little sunlight as possible. The bottom of the pineapple leaf has a gray silvery scale, which immediately begins to fall off as the plant enters drought conditions. The scale is Mother Nature's way of helping the pineapple to absorb maximum sunlight,

so the plant needs to divest itself of this scale. As the drought continues, the leaves bend in the middle and droop. As the drought continues, the leaves, all except the one or two center ones, will fall flat on the ground and tend to dry out. Without any water in extreme drought conditions, the plant can stay alive for as long as 18 months, at which point irrigation will revive the plant and it will continue to grow.

Ian had two pineapple fruit with the crowns intact. He twisted one crown out of one of the fruit and passed it around for the members to examine. He wanted us to notice at the base of the crown where the little roots are already beginning to grow out under the bottom scales, which is a condition reminiscent of the pineapple's ancestry as an airborne bromeliad.

The ideal pineapple growing weather is 90° days and 70° nights, so if the weather would stay that way all year in this area, we could have a wonderful pineapple business. Also the pineapple plant does not like freezing weather; two or three or more freezes will kill the plant.

If you decide to grow pineapples, you have to realize first of all that there are no seeds to buy. Pineapples must be propagated vegetatively. If you start with a pineapple from the grocery store, you simply twist the crown out of the fruit; do not cut it off and leave pulp on the bottom of the crown, or it may rot. After the crown is detached from the fruit, put it out in the sun to cauterize for 3 or 4 days. Also remove 3 or 4 of the bottom leaves so some of the roots are exposed. 12 months after you plant the crown, it is ready to be forced, which means to change it from a vegetative plant to a reproductive plant. Then in about 6 months it will develop a fruit. From this plant you will get one or more slips or suckers and in an additional 18 months another fruit. In the last few years, the pineapple industry has changed from a canning industry where the pineapples are put in cans, to a fresh fruit industry, because people like the fresh fruit. The industry has also moved



from the smooth cayenne, which was the main planting pineapple for many years, to the MD2 Release. If you buy a pineapple in the grocery store, it will be an MD2 by Del Monte. Dole and other pineapple companies are changing to the MD2, which Del Monte failed to patent.

Growing pineapples yourself will require a well drained soil. They prefer sandy soil like we have so much of here in central Florida. They don't like wet feet. They will even grow well in gravel. All you need is something to hold the plant upright. Likewise the soil must be acidic. The best soil for pineapples is between pH4 and pH5. They will even do well as low as pH3. They will grow up to pH7, but not as well, they're more subject to disease and have trouble getting the nutrients out of the soil. Fortunately most of our soil in central Florida is acidic, and if not, we can always do something to make it more acidic. An oak leaf mulch or compost would help to change the soil acidity. Ian prefers to grow his pineapples in a pot larger than 5 gallons; 7½ or 10 gal. pots are better.

Pineapples are subject to nematodes. By planting them in pots and using nematode free soil, we eliminate that problem, and the pot may be sunk into the ground as long as the bottom where the drain holes are is below 6" from the surface, because nematodes are only in the top 6" of the soil. The pineapple roots can then grow out into the soil through the drain holes. They require a lot of fertilizer to produce the fruit and Ian recommends using folial fertilizer, as pineapples take nutrients in through the leaves very easily. If you decide to put it on folially, that is spray it on, do not use over 5% fertilizer in the mixture with 95% water. Pineapples like nitrogen, preferably in the form of urea, if you can find it, & they should be fertilized about once a month. When they are very young, half a teaspoon of urea on the soil about an inch or so from the plant, up to a full teaspoon as they get older. In addition to nitrogen they also require a lot of potassium; however they do not need much phosphorus. As the plant approaches fruiting size & during development of the fruit, it needs a lot of potassium. Apply a fertilizer high in nitrogen & potassium sprinkled on the

ground close to the plant once a month, but use a fertilizer with minor elements; magnesium, iron, boron, etc. One of the problems homeowners have is getting the plant to fruit. Some pineapple plants never seem to want to fruit; they just keep on growing. There are several ways to combat this problem. Ian recommends planting the crown or slip late in the year, November, December, maybe January. As it grows through the year, assuming you fertilize it properly, next winter as the temperature goes below 50°F, the plant itself will switch over to a reproductive plant automatically, so all your pineapples will produce fruit at the same time of the year 6 months later, in July or August. However, if the plant is too small or too large, when cold weather comes it may go right through the winter without ever producing a fruit. The plant itself, if removed from the soil, should weigh between 4 & 6 pounds for the weather to initiate fruiting. That's the easy way to do it. But if you want to have plants bearing at other times of the year or if it's convenient to plant them at other times of the year, you can initiate fruiting artificially. A half teaspoon of carbide may be dropped right in the center of the plant and water added. A mixture of water and carbide will produce acetylene gas. The acetylene gas will be absorbed by the plant, which will convert the acetylene gas to ethylene, which will initiate the fruiting process. Also, there is a product calledm Ethil which can be sprayed on the plant to initiate fruiting. The time to do this is after sunset. Because the ultraviolet rays of the sun will break down the ethylene gas if it is done during the daytime. Also, the pores on the underside of the leaves open at night and this is when the ethylene is taken in. Then it's important to cover the plant with black plastic, like a garbage bag, to give the plant more time to absorb the ethylene. There is another way of doing it, and it works sometimes. That is, you can take an apple, cut it up, put the pieces inside the pineapple and cover the whole thing with a bag. The apple will give off ethylene gas, maybe enough to initiate fruiting, which works sometimes and then again, sometimes it doesn't. The easiest way is to plant the pineapple in the winter and let nature take its course next winter and eat all your pineapples in July & August.

Pineapples that get too much water typically can get a fungi that causes bud rot and is the main killer of pineapples. They are also subject to mealy bugs and sooner or later you can expect to get mealy bugs. Ants carry the mealy bugs to plants and mealy bugs carry wilt. If you develop mealy bugs, the thing to do is to kill the ants. Use a bait the ants will take down and feed the queen and when the queen dies, the nest dies. Amdro is not an effective killer for all varieties of ants. Some eat it like candy.

Ian showed us several slides in stages of a good healthy plant developing the fruit starting about 3 weeks after it has been forced. We could see the bud starting to come up from the center. As it emerges, it has a red corolla. As the fruit starts to take shape, we could see the first flowers beginning to come out. Since the pineapple is in the bromeliad family, it is not surprising that it has a red corolla and purple flowers. The flowers start at the bottom and as the fruit develops, they go up & around. The pineapple is a composite fruit and each flower initiates the small fruit that make up the entire pineapple fruit, but none of the little fruit have seeds. After all the flowers die, we can see the tiny fruit (or eyes) are pointed. As the fruit develops and grows, each of these eyes tends to flatten out. When all the

eyes are flat, the fruit is large and getting close to time to harvest, and finally it begins to color up from the bottom and is ready to pick. So when is it ready? One thing to note is that pineapple fruit is at its peak of sweetness and quality the moment it is cut from the plant. It will never get any sweeter or better tasting after harvesting. All the sugars are already in the fruit and at that point, it begins to decline as the sugars break down. After harvest, the sooner you eat it, the better it will be.

Ian said when the fruit is colored and looks like it's ready, and assuming that rats or possums haven't attacked it, he suggests holding the crown and bending the pineapple over. If it's ready to harvest, it'll break off under the fruit. If it's not ready to harvest, leave it for another day or two.



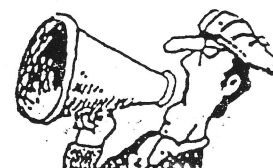
## **Tasting Table June 2003**

Cora Coronel	Bingka with cheese	Bobbie Parker	Banana bread
Lourdes Cordero	Almond flavored jello with lychees	Thom Scott	Green beans & kolhrabi
MaryAnn Branesky	Corn on the cob	Paul Branesky	Fruit cocktail
Myren Branesky	Mango mixed fruit	Angel Branesky	Strawberry lemonade
Stephen Branesky	Ice for juices	Fred Engelbrecht	Fried plantains
Pat McGauley	Cajun Calamari, Prickly pear fruit	Musgraves	Escalloped pineapple
P. Ludwig	Chocolate oatmeal cookies	Sandy Gonzalez	Banana bread
Janet Valadie	Little smokies sausage & BBQ	Karin Yoblonski	Macaroni – Spaghetti
Cathy Creighton	Delicious Strawberry Cake	Marty Springer	Green beans
Joyce Rudd	Apple nut bread	Mike Brandt	Beef paprikash
B.J. Vosburgh	Chips & salsa	M. Ludwig	Jello fruit salad
Lee	Coconut cake, lemon jelly roll, strawberry jello roll, ham & veg. rice pilaf		
Novak	Blueberry pound cake, tropical chicken salad, tropical fruit pizza, juices		

**Thanks** to the many club members who donated to the tasting table. Remember to ask Sally Lee for your free plant exchange ticket (one ticket per family).

## **MEMBERS CORNER**

Property for sale in Auburndale with 8 large producing lychees, 8 producing mangos & many other trees. Contact Bob or Sue Wells Owen @ 863-967-1631.



Taken from the Hillsborough County Extension Service

## Climate

Pineapples grow and produce best where the temperature is warm and relatively uniform throughout the year. In Florida they survive a temperature of 28° F, but sustain much leaf damage, and are killed at lower temperatures. Plantings therefore are restricted to southern coastal areas. Prolonged exposure to temperatures in the low 40's results in internal breakdown or "heart-rot" of the flesh. On the other hand, extreme high temperatures cause sunburning and cracking of the fruit. The climate of Florida is not suited to large scale commercial production of pineapples.

## Soils

While most sandy Florida soils, if well drained, are satisfactory, pineapples thrive best in a sandy loam, mildly acid soil of medium fertility. They tolerate drought remarkably well, but adequate soil moisture is necessary for good fruit production.

## Fertilizer

Pineapples respond better to nitrogen than potassium. However, some potassium must be used in most Florida soils. Phosphorus is needed only in soils deficient in this element. In Florida magnesium is more likely to be needed than calcium and may be applied in the fertilizer or as a foliar spray. Of the minor elements, iron is needed in higher amounts, especially in soils with a pH of 6.5 or higher. Fortunately, and unlike most other plants, iron may be supplied to pineapples by foliar sprays of ferrous sulfate.

In Florida fertilizer applications containing 7-2-7-3 or 8-3-8-4 (N-P-K-Mg), with 40% of the nitrogen coming from organic sources, can be alternated with foliar sprays of urea (80 lbs/100 gal. water) mixed with ferrous sulfate (6-8 lbs/100 gal. water). Start with 1 oz. of 7-2-7-3 per plant four months after summer planting, followed four months later by urea and iron sprays. On the other hand, if plants are on beds covered with plastic, start with a preplant application of 1000 lbs of 8-3-16-4 to an acre or about 1½ ounces of fertilizer per plant on a basis of 12,000 plants per acre. After planting, apply foliar sprays of urea, ferrous sulfate and magnesium sulfate (15 lbs/100 gal. water) every four months.

## Propagation and Planting

Propagation is by planting new vegetative growth from the mother plant. There are four general types: "slips" which arise from the stalk

below the fruit, "suckers" which originate at the axils of leaves, "crowns" which grow from the top of the fruits, and "ratoons" which come out from underground portions of the stem. "Slips" and "suckers" are the preferred planting material, especially if they are large and vigorous.

Pineapples are planted, preferably during the summer, in beds consisting of 2-5 rows of plants with walks between them 18-30 inches wide. Narrow walks are preferred with smooth-leaf varieties. Distance between plants in beds ranges from 10 to 18 inches each way depending on the vigor and size of the variety. Two-row beds are better for mechanical operations, but 5-row beds make more effective use of the land, and are adapted to home plantings.

Use of tar-paper or black plastic as mulch has become widespread because they help to eliminate weed competition and conserve moisture.

## Forced Fruiting

Since pineapples flower erratically, it may be desirable to force plants into producing flowers and fruits. This can be accomplished, provided plants are mature enough, by treatment with one of the following materials: Calcium carbide, applied to the terminal bud either as a few grains (10-12) or in solution (30 gms to 1 gal water). Foliar sprays of naphthaleneacetic acid (NAA) (1 gm in 10 gal water) or B-hydroxyethylhydrazine (BOH). Of the three, BOH is the most effective. It is used commercially in Puerto Rico at the rate of 5 ml of 80% material for 1 gal of water. Most plants, treated when large and growing vigorously, will have fruit ready for harvest 5-7 months after treatment.

## Pests

There are several pests of pineapple in Florida, but the ones most likely to be troublesome are mealybugs and nematodes. Mealybugs are usually introduced with infested planting material. Preventive measures should be taken before planting by dipping "seed" material either in a malathion-water mixture or in a diazinon-water mixture made by using 2 pints of malathion 5E (57%) per 100 gallons of water or 1 pint diazinon 4E (48%) per 100 gallons of water. For small amounts, mix 2 teaspoons of malathion or 1 teaspoon of diazinon per gallon of water. **Avoid prolonged breathing of fumes or skin contact.**

Nematodes weaken and destroy roots. Affected plants are unable to use fertilizer effectively, and lose vigor. Preventive measures are the only means to avoid nematode damage.

## Scheduled Programs:

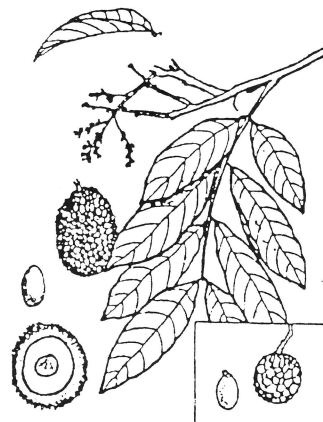
July 12 & 13: USF Botanical Garden Tropical Plant Fair

August 10: Club member Thom Scott will speak on Growing Vegetables

## A GUIDE TO TROPICAL FRUIT TREES &amp; VINES BY Nick Acrivos (continued)

63. *Nephelium mutabile* - Pulasan

Large evergreen tree native to Borneo. Leaves are compound and composed of 2 to 4 pairs of leaflets. Fruit is plum size and produced in clusters of 3 to 5. Skin is thick, pink in color, and the rough surface has short blunt spines. Pulp is whitish, adhering strongly to a large seed. Fruit and seed are both edible. Seed can also be cooked. Propagation is by seed or air layers.



## JANET CONARD

Janet Conard has been a long time member of our group and given much to the success of our meetings and tree sales. Now it is our time to give something back to Janet. She is very sick, in some pain and temporarily confined to bed. We're asking all our members who know Janet to remember her in their prayers. This is the least we can do, and we know that Janet and her loved ones will appreciate our concern.

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FIRST CLASS



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