



# NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2004

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

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PRESIDENT: JIM 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: SEE BELOW (FEB 8)

PROGRAM: OUR PROGRAM FOR SUNDAY FEBRUARY 8 WILL BE OUR PARTICIPATION IN THE FLORIDA STATE FAIR where we will be conducting a CITRUS FRUIT TASTING CELEBRATION. This is an 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 really is and develop in people the importance of growing unusual fruit that we consider so interesting. On Saturday, Feb. 7, we will be picking and cleaning fruit at George Riegler's residence. For more information see comments below in the Citrus Tasting Event at Florida State Fair.

CITRUS TASTING EVENT  
at the FLORIDA STATE FAIR  
Sunday, February 8, 8:30 AM - 4 PM

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 help wherever needed. THANKS to members who signed up to help with this event.

SATURDAY FEBRUARY 7, 10:00 AM, PICK FRUIT @ GEORGE RIEGLER'S: Members who plan to help pick fruit at George Riegler's should meet at George's place at 10:00 AM. Bring your clippers and your appetite. Hamburgers, hot dogs, chips & drinks will be provided. Members may bring a side dish or dessert to share. For questions or more information call Jim & Sally Lee 813-982-9359, Charles Novak 813-754-1399, or Bob Heath 813-289-1068. SEE PAGE 04-09 FOR DIRECTIONS TO GEORGE'S RESIDENCE.

SUNDAY FEBRUARY 8, 8:30 AM to 4:00 PM, 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 @ 8:30 AM. We will be very busy as we start offering samples to the public at 10 AM. 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 the event. Please call one of the phone numbers in the previous paragraph if you have questions.

FLORIDA STATE FAIR HORTICULTURE DISPLAY: February 5 thru 16

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.

**WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS:**

David Eschelbacher  
Lauren Young  
Perry Maggio

Tampa  
Zephyrhills  
Tampa

**From the President**  
Jimmy Lee

Over 120 members and guests attended the January meeting to hear Don & Katie Chafin's very interesting and informative presentation on Bananas. A special *THANKS* to the Chafins for their donation of several impressive stalks of bananas-which members greatly enjoyed.

Our Citrus Celebration and Fruit Tasting at the Florida State Fair will be on Sunday, February 8. Thanks to everyone who signed up to help at this event. We are counting on your help to make this event a success. For those members who plan to help at this event, please be at the Florida Living Center at 8:30 A.M. We start serving at 10 A.M. so we have only an hour and a half to cut up the fruit for sampling as well as making other necessary preparations. If you have any questions please contact me at (813) 982-9359 or Charles Novak at (813) 754-1399. **\*\*\*Also, please read this newsletter carefully as there is more on this event.**

**Scheduled Programs/Events:**

**February 8 (Sunday):** Citrus Celebration at the State Fair    **Note:** No regular meeting at USF  
**March 14:** Ray Jones of the Palmetto Rare Fruit Council  
**April 10-11:** USF Botanical Garden Spring Plant Festival

WHAT'S HAPPENING

Jan-Feb 2004

by Paul Zmoda

I've been doing a bit of grafting lately. As rootstock trees sprout new growth, I seize the opportunity to graft new and rare specimens onto them. On our large, established Israeli loquat tree, I topworked scions of Charles Novak's huge loquat using the cleft graft technique. Charles also was very generous to give me some budwood of his Wooley Leaf white sapote. This I chip-budded and cleft grafted onto two air layers of my 'Redlands' white sapote growing in pots. These rootstock trees are sprouting out well and should be ready to accept these grafts.

From the fantastic fruit tree collection of the late Janet Conard and Al Roberts, I obtained budwood of a special loquat from Spain, an interesting white sapote and some citrus - including the 'Moro' blood orange. These were grafted soon after onto established trees. Thank you, Al.

Our own white sapote of the 'Homestead' variety is loaded with flowers and tiny fruits. Citrus trees are beginning to show signs of new growth flushes. This is an excellent time to top work your trees with multiple grafts of different varieties. Sometimes these conglomerations are called "fruit cocktail trees". And for a good reason: you may make a fruit cocktail salad from all kinds of different fruit from one tree! Your friends will be amazed as you brag that you made this creation yourself.

More horse manure is being applied to all trees as a thick mulch. Wood ashes are spread around plants needing extra potassium such as grafts and bananas.

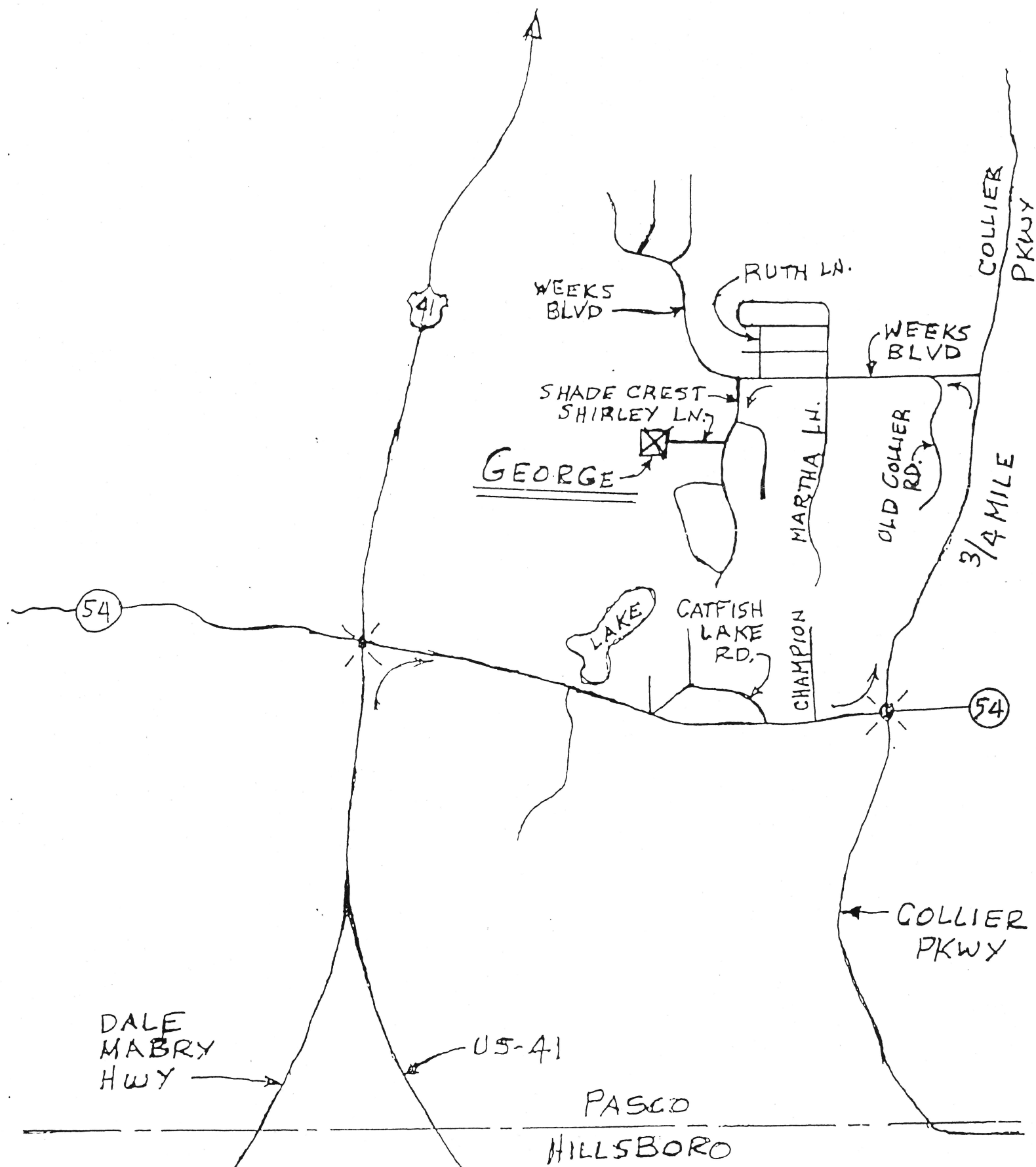
Olive trees got pruned moderately; most upward-growing branches are removed to allow new growth to spread outward. I am ever confident that this will be the year we get olive flowers to form. The weather controls this. Cool/cold nights alternating with warm days in winter trigger the formation of flower buds in olives. The trees must be old enough, though. Three to ten or more years are required.

New plantings: Beets, carrots, shallots, garlic, kohlrabi, pacchoi, olive 'Maurino'.

**CLUB LIBRARIAN:** The club needs a volunteer to take over as Club Librarian. Please contact Charles Novak for information on the duties of the Club Librarian (or speak up at the next meeting).

DIRECTIONS TO GEORGE RIEGLER  
@ 22506 SHIRLEY LANE  
LAND 'O LAKES FL

TO BROOKSVILLE



## GROWING BANANAS at GOING BANANAS NURSERY by DON & KATIE CHAFIN

Katie opened the presentation with an introduction to their nursery which they started about 17 years ago with 35 varieties of bananas, and to share a little information they had accumulated over the years in growing, cultivating and caring for banana plants. They now cultivate about 90 different varieties and are always looking for more. They have collected different varieties from all over the world for the past 25 years; from Indonesia, Southeast Asia where bananas are thought to have originated; from South & Central America, Africa, India, etc. Their nursery is located in Dade County and Katie invited us to come by any time we are in the area. They are open to the public from 8 to 5, six days a week.

Bananas are not only a fruit for eating out of hand, but varieties also exist for cooking and for use in a variety of dishes. Also, there are varieties grown strictly for ornamentals. The leaves of some can be eaten and in many areas the flowering bud is cooked and eaten. She offered to help with any problems we may have growing bananas, being aware that their climate and soil in south Florida are very different from ours here in central Florida.

After this introduction Katie turned the program over to Don, who had an excellent array of slides of various banana plants to show. Don began by mentioning the fact that dinosaurs roamed the earth 60 million years ago and scientists have found banana seeds in Oregon state that date back 43 million years. It is estimated that the origin of man is about 4 million years, so you can see that bananas predate man by quite some time. Bananas are thought to have originated in the subcontinent of India. Secondary centers of diversity are the highlands of east Africa, coastal west Africa and Latin America, including the Caribbean and Central and South America. In 324 BC Alexander the Great saw the sages of India eating bananas. In 500 AD Arab and Indonesian traders were taking bananas to Africa. In 1000 AD bananas spread to Polynesia. In the early 1500's the Portuguese took bananas from Africa to the Canary Islands. In

1516 bananas were introduced to Hispanola, which is the Dominican Republic & Haiti today. From there they spread to Jamaica and the rest of the New World. Bananas and plantains taken together are the fourth most important food commodity in the world, exceeded only by rice, wheat & milk in terms of value of production - a very important commodity.

Bananas are large, herbaceous monocots, not trees. They are a member of the botanical order Scitaminae, family Musaceae and the genus Musa. Close relatives are heliconia and gingers. All bananas evolved from two seeded species, *Musa acuminata* and *Musa bulbisiana*, and from those two species we've gotten all of our current day hybrids. The *acuminata* is generally a sweet fruit with some red coloration in the plant, whereas the *bulbisiana* leans more to the plantain characteristics and is solid green. All bananas are hybrids of these two species. Today there are somewhere between 300 & 500 known varieties identified in the world. Not all of the South Pacific islands and eastern Africa have been thoroughly classified as yet. Each country has their individual names so it becomes confusing because of same bananas with different names.

Bananas are divided into 5 categories: dessert bananas which can be eaten out of hand; plantains that are long and curved and are basically a cooking banana; between those two we have what we call cooking bananas. Cooking bananas can be used either way; when they are very ripe, they can be eaten out of hand, or they can be treated as a plantain & cooked. Then there are the seeded species, which when they become pollinated, are full of seeds and virtually inedible because the seeds are extremely hard. However, the seeds may be planted to grow new banana plants. As a fifth type, we have the ornamental varieties, which are normally dwarf, 6 to 10 ft. tall, and produce a large flower and usually little wannabe bananas.

There are different methods of propagation. If we dig up the rhizome which grows underground right off the side of the mother plant, it can be easily



planted out and grow a new plant. The new plants are known as suckers, pups, ratoons or daughters. Today more and more bananas are produced by tissue culture because the banana fruit companies, Chiquita, Dole and United, need plants in such quantity that they cannot obtain them from suckers. They dig up the rhizome, chop it down in size to about the size of a baseball, with a little pointed stem, where they take the culture to produce thousands of banana plants very quickly.

Don suggests when planting banana plants, place them about 6 to 8 ft apart. When they are growing after a period of time, only allow 4 plants to grow at each location, then stagger them according to size so you have 4 different heights; one just coming out of the ground, one about a third of the way grown, one  $\frac{2}{3}$  its final height and one fruiting. This way you have fruit coming every 6 months from each location. Then fertilize monthly with a high potassium (6-2-12) fertilizer, which is what Don recommends. A small 13 ounce coffee can holds about 2 pounds, which may be spread around each location once a month for producing large bunches. In about a year's time the inflorescence comes out the top. Before it flowers the banana stalk has put out all its leaves, which it will produce at the rate of about one every week or two, for a total of about 50 or 60 leaves. The last leaf before the inflorescence will be a short leaf. When you see that, you know the fruit is coming out. After the inflorescence comes out, it will hang down and you see the red bracts lift up one by one to expose the hands of fruit. At the end of the tiny fruit is the female flower. The stalk will produce a number of hands up to about 13. No more bananas and female flowers will be produced and then the plant produces male flowers. The bananas on edible species are not pollinated so no seeds are produced in the fruit. Then after 4 or 5 months, we can harvest the fruit. It's normal to harvest the fruit just before it begins to turn yellow when the fruit is nice and plump, or you can wait until the first sign of yellowing appears on some of the bananas before harvesting. When the bunch is hanging on the plant, the individual fruit are pointed upward. After you cut off the bunch, invert it and hang it from

the small end upside down so the fruit hangs down. After the fruit is harvested, cut the stalk down to about 4 ft where it will act as a reservoir for water and nourishment to feed the new stalks coming up. As it withers away it may be cut off flush with the ground. If the fruit is left on the plant to ripen, frequently the individual bananas will split, but cut off and hanging up, they ripen more slowly and tend not to split. After the plant has set all its fruit, the inflorescence at the end is no longer needed by the plant and may be left hanging or cut off as you so desire. The end flower is eaten by some ethnic groups but not normally by us.

There are many different types of plants to choose from. The Dwarf Cavendish grows to about 5 ft; Rajapuri, Williams, Gran Nain to about 7 or 8 ft. Above that, plants range on up to the tallest plant, the Saba from the Philippines, which tops out at about 25 ft, a massive fruiting stalk. Most bananas are solid green but some have some coloration; red, brown and yellow or white, providing many variations in the color. We also have the cooking bananas, plantains and ornamentals.

When planting bananas in pots, Don suggests we stick with Super Dwarf at about 3 ft or Dwarf Cavendish. Even so, it requires a very large pot and the pot will become root bound.

After this description Don made his slide presentation of the different varieties of bananas they produce. He started with a slide of the entrance to their 5 acre grove in the Redlands, right up the street from the Fruit & Spice Park. The next slides showed the inflorescence emerging from the plant, opening to expose the little bananas and female flowers, then the male flowers on the end. We saw the Gran Nain which grows about 8 ft tall with bunches of 50 to 60 lbs (this is the commercial variety we find in the supermarket); another Cavendish, the Williams hybrid, 8 ft tall and a very nice flavor; the Dwarf Cavendish, the most common of the Cavendish fruit; the Mysore, a tall plant, a bunch of which Don brought for out tasting; the Raja Puri which has a sweet acid flavor in bunches of about 25 lbs; the Dwarf Red or Spanish Red, with red pseudostem and red petioles (the fruit are red and orange on the inside and very

sweet); the Mahoi or double, which, under certain conditions, produces a double hand of fruit, 2 bunches at the same time; Praying Hands, 12 to 14 ft tall (the bananas in each hand are grown together to produce a fan shaped hand; the individual bananas are separate but the skins are grown together); the Thousand Fingers, which has hundreds of tiny bananas of an excellent flavor; the Red Iholene, which has yellow fruit as it emerges and remains yellow (it's harvested when the fruit is soft to the touch and freckled somewhat. The pseudostem is pink, it's a very handsome plant); the African Rhino Horn, which grows about 12 ft tall and has only 1 to 2 hands of very large fruit; the Orinoco which is a cooking banana from the Hawaiian Islands, very tasty, orange flesh and about 12 ft tall; the French Horn from the Caribbean, a very popular plant; the Pink Orinoco, which comes in a variety of colors, the Musa Velutina, a little pink fuzzy banana (when it gets pollinated, it's full of seeds and when it gets ripe, the peel rolls back and exposes the fruit for the birds to eat and distribute the seeds); the Num Wah, which is a very popular, tasty banana (Don brought samples for us to taste); and many other edible bananas, plantains and ornamental seeded bananas.

Don had the opportunity recently to visit an agricultural research station which had been in operation for 30 years working with bananas, a United Fruit Company station in Honduras. For economic reasons they had left in the 60's and turned the station over to the Honduran government and left their main research scientist, Dr. Phil Roe. This is where the new cultivars have been coming from. At the station they don't engineer, they just hand pollinate the different varieties. They take the pollen from a diploid, a seeded variety, and pollinate a triploid, and then they get the tetraploid, to produce some strange and unusual looking fruit. They are trying to come up with good taste, a short plant, one with nice bunches, that ships well. He had slides showing them harvesting the fruit to extract the seeds. They put the fruit in a press and then put it through a sieve to separate the seeds, then they plant the seeds and grow up the plants to see what they produce from the two different cultivars in the cross. It's very labor intensive and takes a long time, but they achieve some interesting varieties.

This ended the presentation and Katie and Don took questions from the floor.

#### JANUARY PLANT EXCHANGE

Plant	Donor	Winner
Pineapple	Heath	?
Loquat	"	Betty Bruder
Loquat	"	Marv Hymes
Rangoon Creeper	"	?
Beauty Berry	"	Nancy McCormack
Carambola Fruit	"	John Hill
Pineapple	"	?
Avocado seedling	"	Lisa Ghalayini
Ehretia anacua	"	Pat McGauley
Eugene confusa	Heath	Brian Delaney
Plant Labels	Zmoda	?
Plant Labels	"	?
Bird Feeder	"	Tess Anthony
Jack Fruit	Charles Novak	Carl Chapman
Jack Fruit	"	?
Kivai muk	"	Vikki Sinclair
Kavai muk	"	?
Red Passion Flower	"	Steve B.
Red Passion Flower	"	Roberta Harris

continued...

Plant	Donor	Winner
Dancy Tangerines	"	Teri Worsham
Pummelo, Lemon & Limes	"	?
Pummelo	"	?
Pummelo	"	W. Yoblonski
Pummelo	"	Ellen Verdel
White Chayote	"	Kirby
White Chayote	"	Joanne Kitchen
White Chayote	"	Ellen Verdel
White Chayote	"	Paul Branesky
White Chayote	"	"
White Chayote	"	"
White Chayote	"	Marv Hymes
Pummelos 2	Bobbie Parker	?
Maroguy branches	Paul B.	Steve Vosburgh
Maroguy branches	"	Bob Courtney
Maroguy branches 7	"	?
Hawaiian White Ginger	Pat McGauley	Monica Brandies
Moringa Tree	Joanne Kitchen	?
Papaya	Lee	Thom Scott
Papaya	"	"
Papaya	"	Nancy McCormack
Papaya	"	Betty Bruder
Papaya	"	Teri Worsham
Avocado	"	?
Loquat	Lee	?
Kei Apple	Thom Scott	Joanne Kitchen
Surinam Cherry	"	?
Cherry of the Rio Grande	"	Joanne Kitchen
Loquat	"	John Hill
Clinton Wood Fern	Niki & John Hill	Charlie Loenichen
Miracle Fruit Seedling 2	Bob Courtney	Roberta Harris
Misc. Succulents Box 7	B.J. Vosburgh	?
Coral Plant	Beth Rediccliffe	Bill Marler
Pepper Plant	"	?
Red Grapefruit Bag	"	Pat McGauley
Red Grapefruit Bag	"	Rhoda Floyd
Variegated Pineapple	Nancy McCormack	Charlie Loenichen
2 color Cuban Oregano	Rhoda Floyd	?
Numwah Banana	Sharon Pilot	Niki Hill
" "	"	Nancy McCormack
" "	"	Betty Bruder
" "	"	Teri Worsham
" "	"	Renee S.

**Board of Directors Election at the March meeting:** Members who are interested in serving on the Board of Directors should contact Sally Lee (813) 982-9359 or Walt Yoblonski (813) 633-7754. The Board of Directors is responsible for the policies, finances and direction of this RFCI Chapter. 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. 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.

**Tampa Bay RFCI Shirts:** We have polo shirts available for purchase by members – the cost is \$15. We still have some club t-shirts available *free* to members who help with a club event-and have not already received a club t-shirt.

## MEMBERS CORNER

Looking for a source of raw organic milk - goat or cow - for kefir making at home. Call Pat McGauley in Lakeland @ 863-646-1130 or e-mail @ [pattimcgauley@verizon.net](mailto:pattimcgauley@verizon.net) Also looking for Hua Moa banana plant.

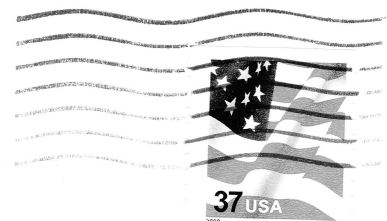


### Tasting Table January 2004

T. Scott	Spice cake & tart cherries	S. Walker	Banana bread
Yoblonski	Rolled Pastrami with cream cheese	Chapman	Ambrosia
Engelbrecht	Couscous with tomato & lentil	Hill	Berry pie
Gibson	Fresh strawberries	Anthony	Fruit cake
Reddicliffe	Blueberry muffins	Springer	Green beans
Vosburgh	Pasta salad	Premraj	Indian chips (papadom)
McCormack	Peanut Butter cookies	Pilot	Banana pudding
Roberts	Cinnamon crumb cake	J. Smith	Cookies
Branesky	Mahewdo La food	Berning	Cranberry Orange Bread
McGauley	Spiced Roselle tea	Terenzi	Cassata cake, apple kutchen
Lee	Banana-Raja puri, punch bowl cake, baked beans, red navel orange slices		
Novak	Orange coconut pound cake, Papaya-citrus salad, mango chutney & crackers, fruit kabobs, pummelo & Dancy tangerines, juices		

*And other delicious items not listed on the signup sheet. The stalks of bananas donated by the Chafins were a wonderful addition to the Tasting Table. Remember to ask Sally Lee for your free plant exchange ticket (one per family please) for bringing food items to the Tasting table. Members are encouraged to contribute to the Tasting Table.*

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