



NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2004

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: JUNE 13

PROGRAM: OUR PROGRAM THIS MONTH WILL BE A WORK SHOP. IF YOU'VE GOT QUESTIONS, WE'VE GOT ANSWERS. So list your horticultural questions and bring them to the meeting. We will have grafting demonstrations, air layering demonstrations, discussion of diseases and insects that adversely affect our plants, general questions & answers and propagation techniques. We will also have our plant raffle & fabulous tasting table, "So come hungry and leave happy." Anyone who has excess fruit or vegetables, bring them to our Farmers Market before the meeting.

HEALING POWER OF GARDENING

(from June 2004 Reader's Digest)

When parenting two teens sends stress levels soaring, Janet Jemmott of Kent Cliffs, NY, makes a beeline for her vegetable garden. "Checking on the size of my cucumbers, picking a ripe tomato, even turning my compost relieves tension and can head off a migraine," she says. Research shows that toiling in the soil offers the following health benefits:

Grow Bones. In a 2002 study of 3310 women, University of Arkansas scientists found that strenuous yard work (pushing a lawn mower, pulling weeds) had the same beneficial effect on bone density as weight training did. High bone density is key in preventing osteoporosis.

Prune Heart Risk. In 2000 researchers in Denmark reported that moderate exercise such as gardening decreased the risk of heart disease by lowering blood pressure and cholesterol. Aim for at least 30 minutes a day.

Nourish the Mind. Exercising mind and body has been proved to reduce dementia risk. Gardening does both. It's an excellent mental workout that requires planning and foresight and encourages learning, says neuropsychologist Paul Nussbaum.

Weed Out Diabetes. A 2002 Dutch study found that male gardeners were more likely to have lower blood sugar levels. And a University of Alabama study of 505 men and women with type 2 diabetes found that active people, including those who gardened regularly, reduced or eliminated their need for medication.

Clip Calories. A 150 pound person burns 162 calories pruning, digging or weeding for 30 minutes. Kids benefit too. A 2003 study showed that non-competitive activities like gardening lure children away from a sedentary lifestyle. And they learn about biology and nutrition, says researcher C. Lawrence Kien. A recent Texas A&M study found kids who gardened 30 minutes a week were more likely to eat vegetables and fruit.

-Jennifer Matlack



WHAT'S HAPPENING

May - Jun 2004

by PAUL ZMODA

These annoying love bugs are getting on my nerves. I must scrub my car more often than I'd like, thanks to them. The love bug, *Plecia nearctica*, has been on the wing here since Christmas! They just won't leave. Love bugs feed on sweet things. They like aphid honeydew; I've watched them working aphid infestations, licking each tiny insect to dislodge a drop of honeydew to eat. I took some photos of this phenomenon which I had never heard of before. Love bugs also adore flowers. They are especially attracted to those of fennel, parsley and carrots, but also cover chestnut flower spikes. Our plum trees are laden with fruit because the love bugs have been around all winter, feeding on nectar and pollinating actively like bees. So you see, they are good for something. Well, it would be great if they would leave after pollinating our flowers. As far as controlling them goes - nothing is very effective. Even dragonflies drop them at once since they are very distasteful to predators. (Notice their black and orange warning coloration commonly seen on other toxic insects such as the Monarch butterfly.) However, we are growing a plant which does kill them in great numbers naturally. The leaves of our pole beans have a surface texture like velcro. Love bugs light on them and become trapped. There they die, from starvation I presume.

Our Julie mango set a nice crop of 30-40 fruit. Now a second bloom is developing. Feijoas are setting fruit nicely. I repotted the seedling caper bushes into large clay pots and backfilled them with crushed lava rocks. Capers are naturally able to grow out of stone walls and even chimneys high above ground with less than 12" of rain annually. With "better" conditions I hope to induce maximum growth.

Many tiny olives are forming on our tree. Certainly not enough to press for oil, but enough, hopefully, to pickle.

Several pounds of epsom salts were scattered around many trees for the element magnesium.

I planted more pawpaw seeds in pots. The first plantings already have 2 to 4 leaves.

New plantings: wild plums, okra, pawpaws (trees & seeds), calabaza squash, jicama.

Twelve years ago this month, we printed the first installment of "What's Happening" by Paul Zmoda. The editors feel it is high time we offer our heartfelt thanks to Paul for all of the great information he has given us over the past 12 years. This is the kind of devotion that makes our Club and our newsletter of such interest to our members. Paul has indicated that he would appreciate input from other members concerning what they are growing and what they are doing in their gardens. We believe it is apropos for those members who are doing interesting things in their gardens to call Paul and offer him information to add to his column for the newsletter each month.

WELCOME to our New Members: David Malaxos Clearwater
 Nicholas Lavelle Tampa

Grafting Kits/Knives/Parafilm Available: Contact Charles Novak (813)754-1399

Fruit trees available to Members: We have some fruit trees remaining from the April Tree Sale and members may purchase them at a very reasonable price (Mangos, apples, avocados, guava, June plum, miracle fruit, mulberry, pitomba, soursop, sugar apple, several varieties of Citrus). They will be available at the June 13 meeting. Members who signed up to purchase trees (at the May meeting) please pick them up at the June meeting or call Charles Novak (813)754-1399 to arrange for pick up.
Thanks!

"THE LODGE ON THE AMAZON IN BRAZIL"

Paul Beaver has worked in the Amazon for the past 25 years. The Amazon Basin is a really huge place, almost as large as the continental United States. He works in the far western forest in the country of Peru. For the past 13 years his work has been concentrated mostly in a national preserve. There, scientists have found the greatest diversity of mammals anywhere in the entire Amazon. It also has a unique and fantastic diversity of plants, birds, insects and amphibians. They believe the great diversity is due to the area remaining forested during the last Ice Age when most of the jungle became a very dry savannah. Here, there are swampy, flooded forests and forests of rolling hills. It is a beautiful experience to enjoy the rain forest with the greatest diversity of flowering plants known anywhere in the world. He showed pictures of one the natives call the monkey's brush. Most of the flowers that we see there are a bright red color. Most flowers spread their seeds through the air by wind and rain, but a great variety of bees and hummingbirds also spread the seeds around the pollinate the flowers. He recounted a case where one of his visitors was wearing a bright red T-shirt and a big hummingbird approached him, like saying "This must be the biggest flower in the world."

Many of his visitors come down to that area of the Amazon to see the great variety of orchids that grow there and photograph them. Paul also showed us a number of different tree types and the great variety of palm trees, including the weird walking palm, which actually shifts the location of its crown in a search for the sun.

There is a great variety of air plants, bromeliads, orchids, tree cactus and vines, all seeking their little section of sunlight. And finally a great variety of fruiting trees, some of which make up a major part of the native diet. The natives originally went out into the forest and harvested the fruit by cutting down the trees, because they grow naturally interspersed

among the other trees in the Amazon. In their forays they were hunting monkeys as well and this was having a very adverse affect on the monkey population. Finally, people from the University of South Florida came down and started plantations so there wouldn't be any reason to go into the forest to get the fruit. Now the monkey population is recovering nicely.

Paul showed us some pictures of the various fruit, some palms, several of which produce very delicious fruit, and other fruit trees as well.

The natives also grow the Mamay Americana, which is native to the Caribbean and has been imported as a plantation plant for its delicious fruit. The Mamay Americana has also been imported into Florida where it is grown here and extensively in the Miami area. They also grow a variety of Ingas, also known as ice cream bean. There are several varieties, some with long, slender pods; others, big, fat pods. They have seeds inside surrounded by a cottony pulp that's very sweet and delicious. Also, several species of the Anona family are native to the area; sugar apple, cherimoya, soursop, etc., the same as what we grow here. The cocona, a small bush which produces a fruit that looks like a small tomato, is grown as an understory plant.

The pineapple is native to the Amazon area and grows wild in the forest where it's cultivated by the natives. Paul showed us slides of all these and many other plants and their fruit. They also grow some imports such as banana and breadfruit. There's also a very delicious fruit that grows on a cactus in the mountainous areas up to 3000-5000 feet. Paul describes it as the most delicious fruit he's ever tasted and it's grown only in that remote area. However he has been able to sneak some in past customs and it is now being grown in a couple of locations in central Florida. It appears that it's up to us to find it and propagate it for our own use.

Paul showed us slides of most of these plants & fruit and indicated that there

were very many other interesting life forms in the area. For instance, they have the world's greatest variety of insects. He showed us slides of a very large grasshopper, the big mean looking Hercules beetle which is quite innocuous, the great diversity of butterflies and moths in beautiful colors, beautiful patterns, weird designs. They also have the largest selection of spiders in the world. Some of the spiders are very large, such as the tarantula. Paul says they're easy to find if you want to. They will often come out of their dens at dusk and climb very slowly up the trees. They don't want to attract attention to themselves, but they do want to get up into the canopy of the trees where they can find prey such as small birds, other small animals and insects.

They also have the greatest variety of fresh water fish in the world. Over 4000 described species of fish live in the Amazon River and its various tributaries, more than in all of the Atlantic Ocean. That's where most of the beautiful fish come from that we see in pet stores; angel fish, tetras, many others. There is also great sport fishing, an interesting variety of catfish, bass and other sport fish. Piranha is a very common fish; it's in all the lakes, rivers that we swim in, in large schools. There's no truth in the Hollywood-type notion that they are vicious man eaters. As long as there is no blood in the water and your method of swimming isn't similar to that of a wounded animal, you can swim quite safely with them.

There is a great variety of amphibians and frogs, some of which are poison dart frogs, which are very tiny colorful frogs. There is hardly any danger in

handling them, only if the poison is ingested. Poison in small doses produces hallucinations and some of the natives use the frogs to hallucinate.

There is also a great variety of snakes, all the way from small tree snakes up to the large constrictors like boas and anacondas, which grow up to 20 feet in length and more. There are 3 different species of caiman in the area. The slide was of a speckled caiman which only grows to about 6 feet long. The black caiman grows to maybe 20 feet.

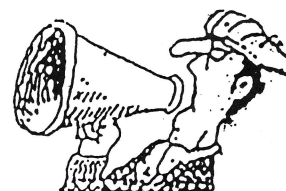
The number of birds is what's really spectacular. They've counted over 400 different species around their lodge; macaws and parrots in various and sundry beautiful colors & many other species.

They have the largest diversity of mammals found in the Amazon area; sloths, which hang upside down and move very slowly through the trees; anteaters, living off the many varieties of ants that live in the trees; kinkajous, which are related to raccoons. The kinkajou Paul showed us was a pet which he raised from a tiny baby after the mother was killed by a native. He fed it fruit & insects until it got old enough to run around loose in the forest. It remained tame to people and would associate playfully with the visitors to the lodge.

They have the largest diversity of primates, 16 different species, found in any reserve throughout the world, one of which is the tamarind, and squirrel monkeys which people keep as pets. Paul had slides of the lodge & some native villages. The country of Peru gave them an award for being the top lodge in the Peruvian Amazon for adherence to their standards. It's a wilderness lodge with no electricity; it's primitive but really very comfortable. However, it is equipped with water and sanitary facilities.

Members' Corner:

Wanted: 1 gallon pots. Charles Novak (813)754-1399



MAY PLANT EXCHANGE

PLANT	DONOR	WINNER
Aloe	Charles Carpenter	Kent Helmick
Aloe	"	"
Aloe	"	R. Harris
Aloe	"	"
Clinton Wood Fern	Niki & John Hill	Steve Brosh
Clinton Wood Fern	"	?
Clinton Wood Fern	"	Gyula Nemeth
Clinton Wood Fern	"	"
Yellow Angel Trumpet	"	Shirley Quenan
Cherimoya	Charles Novak	V. Wilson
Cherimoya	"	Gini Watkins
Pigeon Pea	"	Ellen Verdel
Pigeon Pea	"	Mary Lohn
Pigeon Pea	"	Teri Worsham
Pigeon Pea	"	P. Walsh
Rangoon Creeper	Heath	Steve Lohn
Rangoon Creeper	"	?
Surinam Cherry	"	Ian Greig
Aloe	"	?
Beauty Berry	"	Mary Driver
Loquat	"	Steve Bienkowski
Sea Grape	"	"
Papaya	"	Rose Terenzi
Tamarind	"	R. Harris
Satin Leaf	"	J. Walker
Coffee	Hendry	Marv Hymes
Coffee	"	?
Loquat	Harris	Ellen Verdel
Surinam	?	A. Cimador
Papaya	Lee	V. Wilson
Loquat	"	?
Orange Berry	"	John Hill
Yuca	"	Steve Bierkowski
Sugar Cane	"	Chet Davis
Banana	"	Teri Worsham
Lsu Fig	"	Haselwood
Black Misson Fig	"	Teri Worsham
Guava	"	Heath
Kei Apple	T. Scott	Sandie Worsham
Cherry of Rio Grande	"	James Davis
Loquat	"	?
Loquat	Harris	Betty Bruder
Surinam Cherry	Bobbie Parker	David Malexus
Surinam Cherry	S. Brosh	Julie Bachas
African Snake Plant	Ed & Lorraine Walsh	?
African Snake Plant	"	?
African Snake Plant	"	?
Cavendish Banana	J. Cimafranca	Sandra Murray
Cavendish Banana	"	?
Loquat	Jerry Walker	?
Rosemary	T. Scott	?
Yuca	?	Annette Fairchild

From the President
Charles Novak

Dr. Paul Beaver gave a very interesting and enjoyable program on tropical fruits and other tropical nature of the Amazon at the May 9 meeting. Exciting News! We are planning a trip with Dr. Beaver to his ECO Retreat located near the Amazon River to collect and eat rare fruits of the Amazon. His retreat includes a conservation laboratory and the longest canopy zipline in the Amazon; allowing guests to virtually fly among the treetops. (www.perujungle.com) The tentative date for the trip is April 9-17, 2005. Please give some thought to going on this trip and let me know if you are interested. More information about this trip will be available at the next meeting.

Members who have club library books please return them so an inventory can be completed. Donations of plant books to the library are appreciated. We still need someone to take over the duties of Club Librarian. Please consider volunteering for this important position.

We have not scheduled a speaker for the **June 13 meeting**; instead, we will have the following **workshops** which will be of interest to club members: Grafting, Air laying, Seeds germination, Starting plant cuttings, Setting up a Misting bed, Insect and Disease Control and Questions and Answers. If you have questions about these workshops please contact me. (813)754-1399.

There will not be a regular meeting in July. We are planning a **club trip to Merritt Island on July 11** to taste mangos. The Brevard RFCI has invited us over to tour some of their members' fruit plantings and to taste what fruits are available in July – one of which is the mango. We will try to carpool as much as possible. Please contact Sally Lee at (813) 982-9359 if you can drive and have room for other members who need a ride-or if you are a member who needs a ride. As The Brevard RFCI will need to know the number of people to plan for, please let Sally Lee or me know if you plan to go on this trip.

We are having a **fruit photo contest**. We need photos of fruits for our new club board and would like members to submit photographs of the fruits they are growing. First place will receive a two-year club membership; second place will receive a one-year club membership. Also, the top 10 photos will be placed on our new club board with the members' names. Get your camera out and take some great fruit photos. Details on the photo contest will be in the next newsletter.

Please welcome guests and new members. Thanks for the delicious donations to the tasting table and for the plant donations to the plant exchange.

There will be a Board meeting after the regular meeting on June 13. Members are welcome and encouraged to attend.

Scheduled programs/speakers:

June 13: Plant Workshops
July 11: Trip to Merritt Island



Events of Interest:

July 2004: Chris Rollins, Manager of the Redland Fruit & Spice Park is planning a 28 day trip to SE Asia. For those interested in going he will be visiting Cambodia, Vietnam and Thailand. The scope of the trip includes agriculture, research stations, local markets, the Mekong delta and searching for unusual fruits from the region. rtropicals@aol.com or 305-247-5727

July 10: 12th annual International Mango Festival. 9:30 am to 4:30 pm. Tree sale, display of 170+ locally grown cultivars, tastings and evaluations, lectures. Fairchild Tropical Botanic Gardens, 305-667-1651. www.fairchildgarden.org

COMMENTS ON THE AVOCADO (*Persea americana*) by Bob Heath

The avocado is a member of the Laurel family and so is related to the Cinnamon, Camphor and Sassafras trees. The avocado consists of three races, West Indian, Guatemalan and Mexican. The trees of all varieties are very similar in appearance and growth habits, and may be cross grafted and cross pollinated. Only the Mexican varieties are cold hardy enough for consistent cultivation in central Florida, although Guatemalan and Mexican/Guatemalan hybrids have been grown extensively in this area during warmer times and in very protected areas.

The Mexican varieties are small as avocados go, seldom over 6 ounces. The skin at maturity is green or black, very thin, almost membranous with an anise taste. The flavor and texture of the fruit is excellent. Ripening time is July through August.

Our "Young" variety tree is 16 years old and is planted in an exposed location. It has withstood killer winters with virtually no damage to the foliage. We almost lost the tree, however, shortly after we planted it due to the cold which damaged the root stock, which was apparently a cold sensitive variety. We have since banked up the ground to above the graft and the tree has recovered. It is presently about 10 feet tall and provided us with about 60 of its small delicious fruit last summer. The tree was in bloom one winter when we recorded 20 degrees in our yard. The flowers were only slightly damaged and still set a record crop. We highly recommend this variety for door yard planting in central Florida.

Other varieties of the cold hardy Mexican race of avocado recommended for central Florida are the Gainesville, Mexicola, Topa Topa and Zimmer.

PIGEON PEA (*Cajanus cajan*)

The pigeon pea is a short-lived tree (5 or 6 years in frost free areas) reaching a height of 10 feet. The peas are produced in pods, three to eight peas per pod, and are about 1/4 inch in diameter. The pods are very easy to open when they are dry. If left on the tree, they will pop open spontaneously at the proper time and plant themselves. The tree may be damaged by frost and may be killed at 22°F.

Under normal conditions the tree will bear the year it is planted and all summer through subsequent years. The dried peas may be kept through the winter and planted in seed beds in February, then planted outside in mid March or later. The tree will grow rapidly in good soil, likes water but will stand drought. Limbs are long and slender, becoming pendulous under good conditions.

There are two varieties of pigeon pea. The most common from Central America is brown when dry. A larger variety from Kenya is a marbled rust color. The flavor is different, more like peanuts or soybeans than English peas. They may be boiled like other dried beans with ham or used in soups. The young green seeds are eaten as a vegetable in many countries and have been canned in Puerto Rico & Trinidad. The green pods are sometimes used as a vegetable also. The plants make excellent cattle fodder & can be made into hay & silage. They are planted as green manures & cover crops, used as temporary shade, windbreaks & erosion control. The dried stalks are used for firewood, thatching & basket making in India.

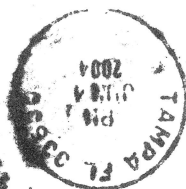
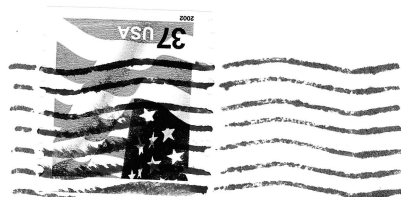
TASTING TABLE MAY 2004

Zmoda	Wild blueberries, Surinam cherries	Dixon	Coleslaw
Walker	Couscous, potato salad, sugar apple	Englebrecht	Flan
Musgraves	Guava cream cheese bites	Mann	Fruit
Parker	Meatloaf, baked beans	Scott	Globe grapes
Coronel	Ginatan bilo bilo	Hill	Key lime pie
Bruder	Strawberry cheesecake	Branesky	Maha blanca
McGauley	Beef jerky, spiced roselle tea	Talacay	Choc. cake
Robertson	Choc. cake, goldenberry pie, yellow tomatoes	Quenan	Macaroni. salad
Anthony	Lemon streusel cake	Smoleny	Veggies, juice
Murray	Green papaya & peanut salad	Carpenter	Pasta salad
Shigemura	Guava cake, jelled strawberries & cream	Cimador	Redskin potato salad
Lohn	Tomatoes, cucumber, green peppers, brownies		
Lee	Pistachio pudding salad, poundcake, squash & vegetable stirfry		
Novak	Date nut bites, fresh fruit platter, passion fruit marmalade w/crackers, tropical chicken salad with banana bread, jaboticabas, Surinam cherries, Juices		

Thanks to everyone who donated to the tasting table. Everything was delicious and thoroughly enjoyed by everyone present.

THE TASTING TABLE
MAY 2004
TAMPA, FLORIDA

FIRST CLASS MAIL



RFI Tampa Bay Chapter
4109 DeLeon St
Tampa FL 33609