



NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2006

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

EDITORS: BOB HEATH, PAULA HARDWICK, CHARLES NOVAK, LINDA NOVAK, JIM LEE, SALLY LEE

PRESIDENT: CHARLES NOVAK

WEBSITE: www.rarefruit.org (CHARLES NOVAK)

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

NEXT MEETING: MARCH 12

PROGRAM: Our speaker at the March meeting will be Dr Douglas Graham, who will be discussing fruit as a part of our natural diet and the nutritional value of fruit. He will be speaking about the variety of fruit which should be an integral part of our total diet. We will be looking at nutrition inherent in the commercial fruit that we see at the grocery store and in the wonderful variety of exotic fruit that we grow.

In addition to this interesting program, we will also have our fabulous tasting table, plant raffle and farmers market. Join us for an exciting meeting and the camaraderie of other rare fruit growers. The meeting will be at the Tampa Garden Club again, at 2629 Bayshore Blvd, Tampa.

PLEASE NOTE that a wedding has been scheduled for the evening prior to our meeting so we will need to do some major sprucing up before the meeting. Anyone who can come in early to help, please call Bob Heath at 289-1068 or Charles Novak at 754-1399 to offer your assistance. Clean-up will begin at 12:00.

WHAT'S HAPPENING

Feb-Mar 2006

by PAUL ZMODA

Our good neighbor sponsors frequent barbecues over big, oak-fueled cooking fires. Later, I have free access to the wood ashes, an excellent source of potassium. With this fertilizer, I treat our bananas, starfruit, citrus, loquats, grapes & others to promote healthy growth as it gently ameliorates acidic soils toward the favorable neutral pH of 7.0. It works wonders on veggie gardens too; just don't overdo it. Don't use wood ashes on acid-loving plants such as blueberries, camellias, azaleas and such.

Our Malaysian mystery tree's fruits are ripening and falling. They appear as egg-sized green olives having a single, hard, rough seed inside. The flesh becomes soft and fragrant while the flavor is slightly tart, and tastes something like an unripe prune plum. The texture is pasty and not unpleasant. This beautiful specimen sure makes an attractive evergreen shade tree.

We attended the Florida Grape Growers annual conference in Ocala. There, we listened to many experts give talks on Florida wineries, grape growing techniques, advances in disease and pest control and winery science. The "mandatory" wine tastings were so rewarding - not only to experience the great selection of Florida made wines, but to watch all the professional winemakers boasting and promoting their special vintages and watching their reactions to each shared sample. Our own Il Primo rosato wine was very well received.

We suffered the lowest temperature of this winter - 23°F! I think we lost all of the fruiting bananas and the lychee's first ever flower buds. The cold passed so quickly that I'm hoping it spared most plants.

From the President

Charles Novak

Our fifth Citrus Celebration at the Florida State Fair, Sunday, February 12, was again a success. The weather was very cold and windy but we did have a good turn out of people sampling the many varieties of citrus. I want to "THANK" everyone who helped with this event (donating fruit, picking and washing fruit, contributing food for the picnic on Saturday, delivering the fruit to the Florida State Fair and helping with the Citrus Celebration on Sunday). "Thank You" to George & Elaine Riegler, Hue & Raffina Dindial, the Applebys, and the Citrus Arboretum for their donations of citrus fruit. A special "thanks" to Walt and Karin Yoblonski, Jerry Springer, Ashok Dhond, Jimmy Lee, Adam Zaidan, and Terry Lee for picking the fruit at the Applebys and at the Arboretum. A good time was had by everyone who picked and washed citrus fruit at George and Elaine Riegler's. Steve & Roberta Harris, Jerry Amyot, and Thom Scott helped deliver the fruit to the State Fair. Many members showed up on Sunday to cut up the citrus for sampling and to do all the other tasks necessary to make this event a success. We received many favorable comments from the public. We have a great club! So many members are willing to help by donating their time and energy to club tree sales and other events

I hope everyone got through the freeze without a lot of plant damage. The temperature got down to about 27 degrees at my place. My banana plants and other unprotected, cold sensitive plants have damage.

Please attend the March meeting and participate in the election of the Board of Directors.

I have been informed of plans to relocate the horticulture exhibit area at the State Fair from the Florida Living Center to a tent. The Florida State Fair Executive Director Charles C. Pesano would like to convert the horticulture area into a kitchen. We have been urged to write letters to the following people stating our disapproval of this change:

Charles H. Bronson,
Commissioner Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
The Capitol
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0800
Phone: (850) 488-3022
Website: <http://www.doacs.state.fl.us/index.html>

Authority Chairman
A. D. Sandy MacKinnon
334 Blanca Ave. S.
Tampa, FL 33606

Authority Member
Olin Mott
PO Box 11994
Tampa, FL 33680

Mr. George M. Steinbrenner, III
1 Steinbrenner Lane
Tampa, FL 33614

Scheduled Speakers/Events:

March 13:	Dr. Douglas Graham: The nutritional value of fruits and fruit as a part of our natural diet
April 8 & 9:	Spring USF Botanical Garden Plant Festival

*****MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS DUE IN MARCH*****

PLEASE CHECK YOUR MAILING LABEL. IF THERE IS A RED MARK ON IT, YOUR MEMBERSHIP EXPIRES MARCH 31. Please pay your dues (\$18) at the next meeting or mail your check to :

Make check payable to ----- **Tampa Bay RFCI**
 Charles Novak
 2812 N. Wilder Rd.
 Plant City, FL 33565-2669

BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTION

At the March meeting the general membership present will elect the Board of Directors for a one-year term. The Board then elects the executive officers. Directors must be willing and able to make a significant commitment of time and energy to the club. The Board meets monthly or at such times deemed necessary. The Board is responsible for the policies, finances and direction of the Chapter. Therefore, it is very important for Board Members to attend as many meetings as possible. The Board of Directors meetings are open to the entire membership and members are encouraged to attend and participate in the discussion of issues.

The nominating committee has selected the following members for your consideration as the next Board of Directors:

Bob Heath	Thom Scott	Verna Dickey
Jimmy Lee	Charles Novak	Judith Cimafranca
Walt Yoblonski	Linda Novak	Andrew Hendrickson
Susan McAveety	Jerry Amyot	Steve Brosh
Fred Engelbrecht	Paul Branesky	Terry Lee
Teri Worsham		

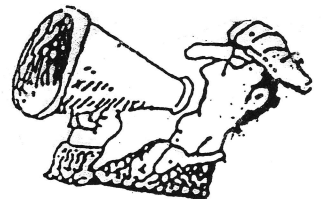
Additional nominations will be accepted from the floor at the March meeting. Please plan to attend the March meeting and vote for your Board of Directors.

State Fair Exhibit: Steve & Roberta Harris, Thom Scott and Bob Heath helped with our State Fair horticulture display. A huge 'Thank you' to them and to all the members who manned the display. Many fairgoers stopped by our exhibit, admired the fruit trees and display fruit, and asked questions about their own fruit trees and/or fruit trees they would like to plant. Member Jene VanButzel (Jené's Tropicals) generously provided the plants in our display. Jené's Tropicals is located at 6831 Central Avenue in St. Petersburg and specializes in citrus, exotic fruit trees and other tropical plants.

pH Soil Testing: If you would like to have your soil's pH tested obtain samples from 6 to 8 sites within the area you want tested. Mix the soil together and put into a plastic bag. You will need at least 1 cup of **moist** soil.

Members' Corner:

Wanted: 1 gallon pots. Charles Novak (813) 754-1399. If you have extra 1 gallon pots please bring them to the March meeting or I can arrange to pick them up. *Thanks.*



AN ODE TO BOB HEATH by Rowdy O'Smith

I have seen what is beneath
the hearts of men with great relief.
How wondrous is their compassion
to sustain lives in every fashion.
Especially the sweet fruit of the vine
so all could dine on bread and wine.
Such men are blessed forever more,
regardless of what may be in store.
Dear Lord, bless their flesh and bone,
for they are as rare as a precious stone.
Their time is spent growing rare fruit,
for it's their rarity that makes each a beaut.
And then to folks these trees bequeath.
Just ask the man named Robert Heath.

NEW RFCI SIGN

Those who tended our booth at the State Fair or went to the fruit tasting Citrus Celebration at the Fair Sunday, Feb. 12, have seen our new sign. We will be bringing it to the next meeting for the benefit of those who haven't seen it yet. I think it's a beaut. The art work and lettering was done by a master restoration artist, Michael A. O'Bryant. He did this as a favor to the Rare Fruit Council because of our interest in the Renaissance Center for the Arts, where he volunteered his expertise. We would like to recommend to all our members to give him a call if you have restoration work or a need for his artistic talent. He specializes in all phases of antique paintings and cathedral icon restoration and can conduct work on site when necessary.



Mosquito Trivia

The next time you swat a mosquito, consider this:

- A mosquito doesn't really bite; it stabs by piercing your skin with its long proboscis.
- Only female mosquitos stab. They need the blood to nourish their eggs. Male mosquitos are vegetarians, feeding on flower nectar.
- The mosquito's saliva causes that itchy bump on your skin. The saliva keeps the blood from clotting while the mosquito drinks its fill.
- A mosquito can drink one-and-a-half times its own weight.
- There are about 3,000 species of mosquitos worldwide; more than 165 are found in North America.
- Mosquitos like dark colors, especially blue.
- Mosquitos cause more human deaths worldwide than any other creature.
- Mosquito-borne diseases include malaria, encephalitis, West Nile virus, dengue fever and yellow fever.

MASTER GARDENERS SEMI-ANNUAL PLANT SALE

Saturday, April 1, 2006

9:00 AM to 2:00 PM

PINELLAS COUNTY EXTENSION

12520 Ulmerton Rd

LARGO FL 33774

Phone (727) 582-2599

<http://www.flbg.org> Click on Calendar of Events

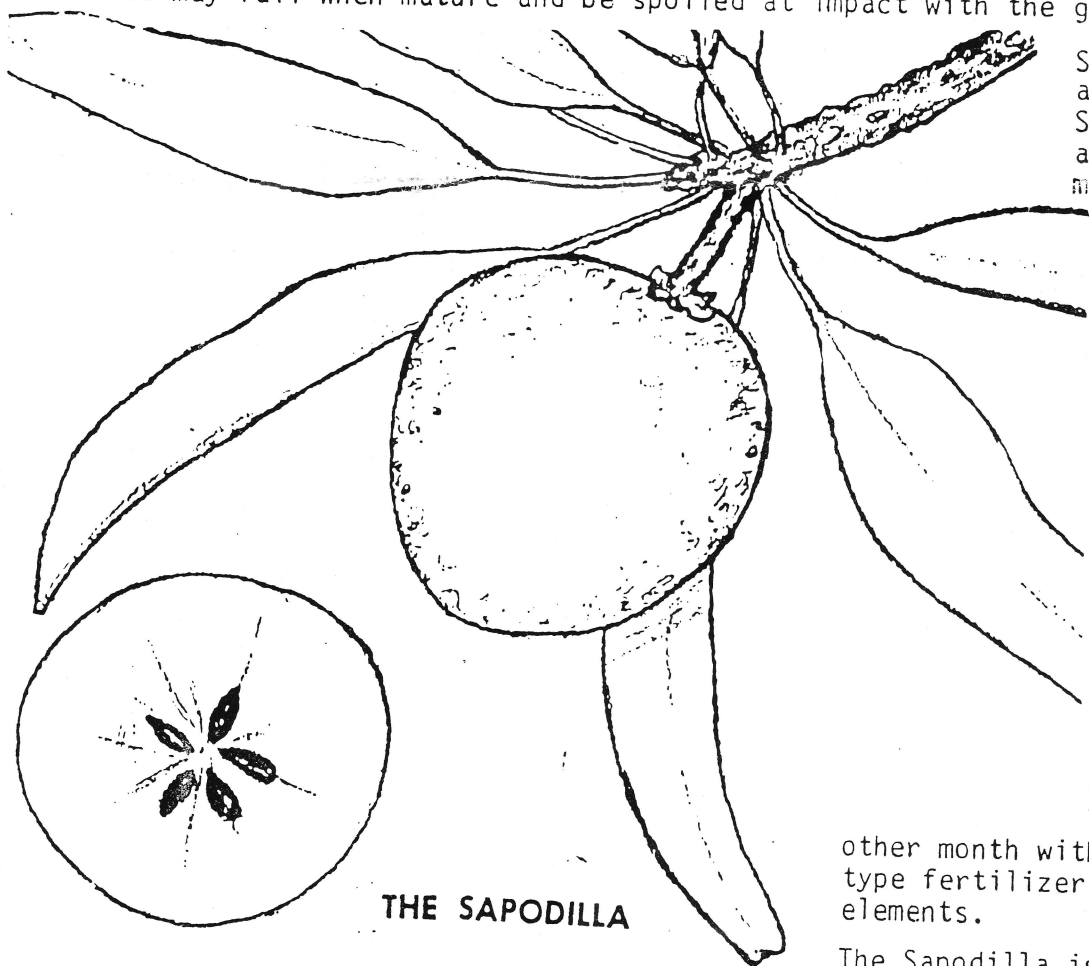
There will be many flowers, shrubs, fruit trees, herbs, butterfly plants, etc. at exceptionally affordable cost. Horticulturists and master gardeners on hand to answer your gardening questions.

TROPICAL FRUIT OF THE MONTH - SAPODILLA

That the sapodilla will grow and fruit in central Florida can be attested to by several of our members who presently are enjoying the tasty brown fruit. Sapodilla is a member of the Sapotaceae family. You may find it listed as Manikara Zapota or Achras Sapota. In its native habitat in Central America and Mexico, it is a large slow growing evergreen tree, as is the Mamay Sapote, a near cousin. The tree is highly salt tolerant and adapts to a wide range of soil types and growing conditions. However, it is tropical and should be protected against temperatures below 30°. For this reason we recommend growing the trees in a container or in a location where they may be protected and can easily be covered.

A grafted tree will fruit when it is only three or four years old and perhaps four feet high and an inch or so in diameter. It is a dense, beautiful tree with thick glossy green leaves clustered at the tips of the branches. The wood is hard and termite resistant and is provided with a milky sap which is the source of the original chicle chewing gum.

The fruit is slow to develop from the small inconspicuous flowers and will normally reach maturity during the summer months, though some fruit may mature during the winter. The fruit is two to three inches long, oval, brown and scurfy. The flesh may be cream colored to brownish in the different species and normally provided with six or eight hard flat black seeds. It is normal to pick the fruit when it is mature and not allowed to ripen on the tree, as it may fall when mature and be spoiled at impact with the ground.



THE SAPODILLA

Suggested varieties are Prolific, Brown Sugar, Dade, Madella, and Russell. The tree may be grown from seed and later grafted from a tree with good quality fruit or air layering may be used to propagate new plants. A grafted tree will normally fruit in three to four years. The leathery leaves vary in size but average three to four inches in length. They are elliptical and frequently pointed, about 2" wide, a dark glossy green on the upper surface and pale green underneath. Young trees should be well nourished and given plenty of water for rapid growth. They may be fertilized every

other month with a citrus or fruit tree type fertilizer provided with the minor elements.

The Sapodilla is a desert fruit to be eaten raw or it may be pulped and used for ice creams or sherbets. Because of the chicle in the fruit, cooking usually results in a rubbery mess. It is reported that the Caribbean fruit fly will attack the Sapodilla but I have not had that problem, although the Caribbean fruit fly is very much in evidence in my neighborhood.

FAMILY - MARANTACEAE100. *Thaumatococcus daniellii* - Katemfe

A West African plant introduced into South Florida in recent years. Its large, dark green, oval leaves are produced on 2 foot stems. Flowers are light purple and fruits are red. The flesh of the fruit is very sweet. Experiments are being conducted with this plant for potential use as a sweetener. Propagation is by seed.

**FAMILY - MELASTOMATACEAE**101. *Melastoma malabathricum* - Singapore rhododendron

Shrub to 8 feet, native to Tropical Asia. Leaves to 3 to 4 inches long and hairy. Flowers are 1-1/2 inches long and purple. The red fruit is about 1/2 inch across. The red pulp is eaten fresh. Propagation is by cuttings.

Medium-sized tree, native to the Malayan peninsula and the East Indies. It is a slender tree which bears pinnate leaves composed of 5-7 leaflets 4-8 inches long. The small sub-sessile flowers are borne on racemes or spikes on the trunk or large branches. The fruits held in clusters are 1-2 inches in diameter, straw colored with a thick leathery skin enclosing segments of white translucent, juicy, aromatic flesh. The fruit is eaten fresh or cooked. Fruit size and quality vary widely.

FAMILY - MELIACEAE102. *Lansium domesticum* - Langsat, Duku

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WASHINGTON, D.C. 20250

FIRST CLASS MAIL



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Tampa FL 33609

