



# RFCI

## NEWSLETTER

TAMPA BAY CHAPTER of the

RARE FRUIT COUNCIL INTERNATIONAL INC

JULY 2007

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WEBSITE: [www.rarefruit.org](http://www.rarefruit.org) (CHARLES NOVAK)

MEETINGS ARE HELD THE 2<sup>nd</sup> SUNDAY OF THE MONTH @ 2:00 PM.  
@ THE TAMPA GARDEN CLUB, 2629 BAYSHORE BLVD, TAMPA

NEXT MEETING: JULY 8

PROGRAM: OUR SPEAKER FOR JULY WILL BE DR. FUTCH. HE IS THE DIRECTOR OF TRI COUNTY EXTENSION SERVICE AND IS CONNECTED TO THE RESEARCH CENTER OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA. He will speak on all aspects of citrus and will cover current problems such as "citrus greening". We look forward to learning about citrus because it is common among many of our club members. We will also enjoy our spectacular banquet table, great raffle & farmers market. This should be an interesting & educational meeting – see you there.

### WHAT'S HAPPENING

Jun-Jul 2007

By PAUL ZMODA

To paraphrase a song: "Hey La, Hey La, my bees are back." Honeybees. In my owl nest, the little buggers built a real nice hive. I've always wanted to have a honeybee hive around my house, ever since I was in the Apiary Society at my alma mater, Delaware Valley College of Science & Agriculture. I guess I'll have to build another nesting box for the poor homeless owls.

Our largest white sapote tree is dropping ripening fruit with a loud "plop". We are really enjoying this new-to-us fruit with its creamy, lemony-pear flavored pulp.

At a local supermarket I found a freshly delivered box of Dominican mamey sapotes, *Pouteria sapota*, some of almost 5 pounds. I purchased a 2 pounder and let it ripen to softness. The inside was so rich and good that I could only eat one-quarter of it, but I had plans for the rest. Later, I scooped out the orange-red pulp and put it in our blender with a spoonful of sugar, a cup of heavy cream and some milk. After liquefying this, I placed it into a covered bowl and put it in the freezer. Then, every ½ hour, I stirred it, eventually producing a rich, smooth, delicious, colorful ice cream. I'm positive this technique would make fabulous ice cream with many other fruits which we grow. Try banana, sugar apples, peaches or maybe even avocados.

One of my cherimoya trees has been flowering heavily & I have been hand pollinating them religiously, hoping for a fruit-set of one of the best fruits known. It's not as easily done as with sugar apples, since the tiny sap beetles aren't as interested in cherimoya blooms to help me. Maybe it's because cherimoya flowers smell like bleu cheese; I know some people who hate bleu cheese, so maybe the beetles do too!

New plantings: *Eugenia stipitata*, figs, pole beans, yardlong beans, dragonfruit cacti & cereus cactus.

"Gardening requires lots of water - most of it in the form of perspiration." Lou Erickson, Poet

"What a man needs in gardening is a cast-iron back with a hinge in it."

Charles Dudley Warner, Writer

## JUNE PLANT EXCHANGE

PLANT	DONOR	WINNER
Carissa	Bob Heath	Vikki Sinclair
Yellow Passion Fruit	"	Alan Male
Loquat	"	Tom Schaefer
Yellow Passion Fruit	"	?
Abacca Pineapple	"	Carol Bennett
Cabeluda	"	Charles Novak
Surinam Cherry	"	Carol Bennett
Tamarind	"	Tom Schaefer
Beauty Berry	"	Carol Gamboni
Blackberry Jam Fruit	Heath	Vic Gamboni
Meyer Lemon	RFCI	Sanda Worsham
Mayer Lemon	"	Marilyn Chavez
Ponderosa Lemon Fruit	Linda Novak	Sanda Worsham
Smooth Cayenne Pineapple	Lillian Smoleny	?
" " "	"	?
Banana (Misi-luki)	Jerry Coronel	R. Harris
Banana (Ice cream)	"	Alan Male
Dwarf Plantain	"	?
Passion Fruit	Steve & Mary Lohn	Banni Miller
Tomato plants	Pat McGauley	?
Pomelo seedling	"	Steve Lohn
Passion Fruit	"	David Miller
Jewels of Opar	"	?
East Java Lime	Pat McGauley	?
Bromeliad	Yoshimin	?
Frangipani cuttings	"	Free
Neem tree	Parson	Tom Schaefer
Neem tree	"	Sally Jones
Fig	Tony Ferreira	Linda Brown
Loofa	Linda Brown	?
Jackfruit	"	?
Papaya	"	Lillian Smoleny
"	"	?
Potted Hawaiian Plumeria	David & Banni Miller	?
Potted Ginger	"	?
Peperonia	Marilyn Chavez	?

PLEASE REMEMBER WHEN YOU WIN A PLANT TO PUT IT IN A BAG &  
PRINT YOUR NAME IN THE WINNERS' COLUMN!

### Horticulturist William "Bill" Whitman recently passed away.

Several members of our Council had the pleasure of touring his Bal Harbour backyard which is planted with many rare and tropical fruiting trees. Bill Whitman traveled the world looking for tropical fruits and is credited with introducing over 80 varieties to South Florida.

In 1955, Whitman helped found the Rare Fruit Council (Miami) and served as president until 1960. In 2001, he authored the book, *Five Decades with Tropical Fruits: A personal Journey*.

Bill Whitman was an expert surfer and spear-fisherman. The underwater camera he invented and patented in 1951 shot footage that ended up in the Oscar-winning documentary *The Sea Around Us*.

In 1999, Bill Whitman donated \$1 million to the Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden where the Whitman Pavilion was erected in his honor. In 2003 he donated \$4 million to endow the tropical fruit program. A public memorial will be held at Fairchild Garden in November.

### *Tasting Table June 2007*

Smoleny	Broccoli, corn & carrots	Sinclair	Halawa
Coronel	Fried rice, maja blanca	McGauley	Sweet fruit tea
Musgraves	Lychee & mangosteen, passionfruit juice	Topping	Lomain noodles
Lohn	Walnut brownies, choc. kisses	Tamura	Mixed fruit
Terenzi	Walnut orange brownies	Ferreira	Potato salad
Bennett	Tapioca w/black walnuts	Walker	Miami mango cake
Sawada	Vegetable Sushi tray		
Shigemura	Butter cake, brownie chocolate cheese cake, veal cream stew		
Novak	Jambalaya w/sausage, macaroon cookies, lime-cream cheese cookie cups, fig preserves with crackers, Fruit juices		

and many other delicious edibles. Contributions to the tasting table are encouraged and very much appreciated by everyone. Please list your contribution on the signup sheet and ask for your free plant exchange ticket.

### Speakers/Events:

**July 8:** Citrus & Citrus diseases; Dr. Stephen Futch, Multi-county Extension Agent  
**August 12:** Making wine from tropical fruit; Debra Sims, Sims Winery

**New Members:** Steven Woolheater      Lithia      Vicki Parsons      Brandon

**Membership Directories, 2007-2008,** will be available at the July meeting.

**pH Soil Testing:** If you would like to have the pH of your soil 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.

**Grafting tape, knives and Parafilm** are available for purchase by members who would like to graft their own plants. RFCI Polo Shirts are also available. Contact Charles Novak (813) 754-1399.

## Message from the president :

We had an informative presentation on the virtues of "The Ultimate Herb", NEEM from Vicki Parson. Not only will it drive away insects, but it will also battle diseases. Many members were enthused and ready to purchase the NEEM oil products.

I had just returned from a visit to Japan and mentioned how expensive fruits are there, certainly \$10. a peach or \$50 for a melon is outrageous.

I want to thank those members who supply us with delicious food and drink for our tasting tables, your generosity is much appreciated.

Any suggestion from members on how to improve our meetings are welcome.

## RFCI ANNUAL AUDIT

It's time to do the audit of our books. We need a member with business know-how to volunteer to sit down with our treasurer (Susan McAveety) to audit our books. This is a requirement for all nonprofit corporations in Florida. Please sit down with Susan at the July meeting or call her at 813-975-0177 to volunteer.

## THE BENEFITS OF NEEM

by Vicki Parson

Vicki gave us a little of her gardening background. She got into gardening at an early age, but in 1990 she developed a chemical sensitivity where certain things made her sick, so she started looking for options and discovered the neem tree. She bought a book called "Neem Tree, A Tree for Solving Global Problems". That was in 1992. It was written by National Academy Press and basically concluded that the neem was a wonder tree and everyone should be using it as an ideal pesticide. That was 15 years ago and people today have some idea of what a neem tree is, but not 100%. She tells people that as a pesticide it is so safe, it has been used in some societies for 4500 years. People look at her as if she's selling snake oil, but some of the things it does really well are being proved in labs across the country, in both medicinal & agricultural research. But she says she does not sell anything that is labeled an insecticide or pesticide or any kind of repellent.

The tree is very attractive, but cold tender. Her tree has been frozen to the ground 3 or 4 times, but it comes back up. Her tree is beautiful and flowering with lots of little white flowers and little yellow fruit.

### "Solving Global Problems"

- Published by the National Academy Press in 1992
- Still available online: Google NAP and neem; it will be at the top of the list
- Envisioned neem as an "ideal pesticide" with minimum impact on people, animals and beneficial insects
- Lead researcher Noel Vietmeyer concluded "even some of the most cautious researchers are saying that neem deserves to be called a 'wonder plant.' "



- Nearly a thousand reports published since 1992
- About half agricultural, about half medicinal
- Neem Tree Farms does not sell pesticides, insect repellants or herbs that treat or heal any medical disorder.

**About the Tree**

- An evergreen tree native to India & Burma, *Azadirachta indica* is related to both the mahogany and china berry
- Tall, spreading and fast-growing, in frost-free zones or microclimates it can reach a height of 25m and 2.5m in girth.
- Very attractive tree with dark green glossy leaves and honey-scented flowers in the spring.
- Attracts both bees and birds who quickly acquire a taste for abundant flowers and fruit.

**Growing Requirements**

- Prefers frost-free but will grow back from roots
- In West Africa, becoming the preferred tree for preventing desertification.
- Nigerians, Ghanans, Israelis all planting hundreds of thousands of trees to slow down the Sahara.

**Potentially Invasive?**

- Over past 12 years, have spread into abandoned orange groves in Mexico
- Birds use old trees as perches
- Most places in the world neem is welcomed for shade.
- Fairchild and ECHO both say the potential to become a pest is minimal.
- Not likely to be an issue in Florida where uplands are already developed
- Occasionally have seeds sprout under trees but require "damp but not wet" conditions. Don't appear to thrive in shady spots.
- Will tolerate occasional standing water – think monsoon – but not over the long term, like Florida wetlands.
- Even in India, trees are found mostly along streets and in yards, planted by humans.

**Hurricane Resistance**

- Literature and my personal experience somewhat at odds
- Literature describes fast-growing trees with limbs that break easily
- Trees in Key West came through five named storms in 2005, including Katrina and Wilma
- Lost leaves but not branches – so somebody else had to clean up the mess.
- Literature says not salt-tolerant, they're thriving even after spending 12 hours in three to five feet of salt water
- Another friend lives on the water on the northeast side of island and reports that they come through salt spray as well as anything but sea grapes.

**Production**

- A full-grown tree can produce 30 to 100 kg of fruits, depending on rainfall, fertility, soil type, and ecotype.
- 50 kg of fruit yields 30 kg of seed, which gives 6 kg of oil and 24 kg of seed cake.
- Nearly unlimited quantities of neem leaf which can be used in similar manner

**How Used?**

- Around the world, neem or its derivatives have been shown to affect 400 to 500 species of mites and ticks, nematodes, and even noxious snails and fungi, and aflatoxin - producing *Aspergillus* spp.
- The EPA notes that it affects many kinds of insects, including whiteflies and moth larvae, as well as mites, aphids and related organisms.
- Used for centuries in India
- "Discovered" by Western world in 1957 when swarms of locusts ate everything in sight – except the neem trees

**Grow your own**

- Used for centuries in India
- "Discovered" by Western world in 1957 when swarms of locusts ate everything in sight – except the neem trees

**Easy Neem Recipe**

- Fill blender with neem leaves, add enough water to mix
- Strain leaves, I use the leg of an old pair of pantyhose.
- Leave in two or three gallons of water overnight
- Add a couple drops of soap and spray.
- Be sure to use the left-over leaf as a mulch, it becomes a systemic pesticide.

**All-purpose Spray**

- Can be used on anything, literally safe enough to drink (minus the soap course)
- For roses or fruit trees with fungus issues, add a tablespoon of baking soda for every gallon of water.

**Personal Experience**

- Started growing neem so I could garden without pesticides but ended up with no room for anything else.
- Keep leaves in garage, only see dead roaches. Also sprinkle hand full in bottom of recycle bin, kitchen cabinets, etc.
- Feed dogs leaf and/or bark, haven't seen a flea in years.
- Growing neem trees HELPS with mosquitoes and fire ants but doesn't control them. New neighbors noticed difference though.
- Homemade leaf spray works pretty well for mosquitoes, but oil is better.

**Using neem oil**

- Not likely to harvest enough in Florida
- Still less expensive than traditional pesticides, even without counting environmental damage
- Georgia Organic Solutions, started by third-generation farmer leasing out land to focus on selling neem.
- Non-toxic is nice, BUT
  - Does it work?
  - Is it cost-effective?

- Now buys neem oil by container full, nearing completion of EPA paperwork.
- Other companies already market neem oil as a pesticide, including Bayer and Gardens Alive, whether they call it neem or not.

### One more thought

- First tried neem cake somewhat skeptically until I accidentally used it on milkweed that had aphids.
- No caterpillars for six weeks – no squirrels either
- Pat McGauley swears by mixture of neem and karanja cakes

### Medicinal Uses

- Again, I'll focus on using what you are or can grow, but leaf is most well-researched from medicinal perspective
- Indians call it "the village pharmacy," in Swahili, it's known as Mwarobaini, loosely translated to "a **cure** for **40** ailments."
- Neem leaf "known to be:"
- Antibiotic, antiviral, antifungal, analgesic, anti-inflammatory, anti-tumor
- New research looking at other uses including cancer, AIDS, diabetes, liver protection and malaria.

### [www.researchneem.com](http://www.researchneem.com)

- I'm a gardener not a scientist, but two areas of research are particularly interesting.
- Immune-boosting properties: neem leaf boosts both the lymphatic and cell-mediated immune system including the Killer T cells. Some researchers attribute its contraceptive properties to this action.

### [www.usingneem.com](http://www.usingneem.com)

- Other compounds in neem leaf act as antioxidants, attracting free radicals that have been implicated in everything from wrinkles and cataracts to liver disease, cancer and strokes.
- Preliminary research in India shows that neem leaf is extremely high; we're having that research replicated in the US right now.
- Two other things we're particularly excited about: skin care and gum disease
- Anti-Itch Formula works on an incredible number of issues, from bug bites to psoriasis. It even repels fire ants or minimizes the bites if you don't get it on first.
- Chew sticks made of neem twigs are traditionally used to brush teeth, we've reformulated with baking soda, cinnamon and cloves and hear incredible results from many customers.
- Samples of both are available.

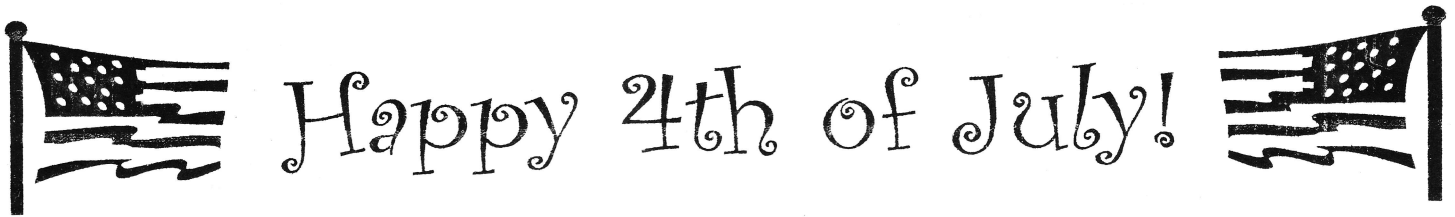
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" He that would perfect his work must first sharpen his tools." Confucius

## The Wheelbarrow

Chinese inventor, Ko Yu, is credited with the idea for the first wheelbarrow, possibly around the 1st century B.C. It has been used ever since for carrying all sorts of items; from agriculture materials to war equipment (it was a favorite with ancient Chinese armies), and even to carrying human beings. The wheelbarrow appeared in Europe about the 11th or 12th century. The earliest known Western depiction is in a window at Chartes Cathedral in France, dated around A.D. 1220. Farmers soon realized it was a cheap, efficient substitute for animals. The first wheelbarrows had a wheel in the center of the wooden frame; later it was placed at the front of the frame. Wood has been replaced with metal frames, metal and plastic trays and even pneumatic rubber tires. Even folding versions are available. Today, tractors and harvesters are used to do most of the hard work on agriculture land, but the wheelbarrow is still very important to the home gardener.

Garden Tools, Bradley & Negus (2001)

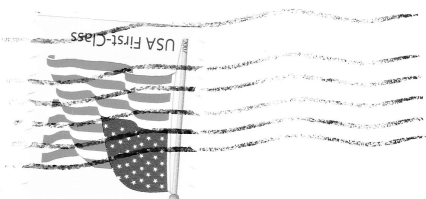


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