



RFCI

NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2008

TAMPA BAY CHAPTER of the
RARE FRUIT COUNCIL INTERNATIONAL INC

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PRESIDENT: FRED ENGELBRECHT

WEBSITE: www.rarefruit.org (CHARLES NOVAK)

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

NEXT MEETING: JAN. 13

PROGRAM: OUR SPEAKER FOR JANUARY WILL BE HAR MAHDEEM, WHO IS A HORTICULTURIST FROM SOUTH FLORIDA, SPEAKING ABOUT THAT INTERESTING FAMILY, THE ANNONAS. This should be an interesting program of some of our more desirable fruit by a very knowledgeable speaker. We will also enjoy our fabulous banquet table, great plant raffle and farmers market, as well as interesting camaraderie. The meeting will start at 2:00 pm Sunday, January 13, at the Tampa Garden Club. See you there!

WHAT'S HAPPENING

Dec 2007 – Jan 2008

By PAUL ZMODA

Way back in late August, I planted a few seeds of a vegetable type which I have always found to be quite versatile and satisfying both to grow and to consume. This particular variety of *Cucurbita moschata* is called Chinese squash, one of the hard shelled kinds of winter squash known for its keeping quality. Similar cultivars are called calabaza, Seminole pumpkin, Cuban squash and tropical pumpkin.

These sprawling, productive vines will provide so much in the way of food value that everyone should try to grow them once in a while. Once planted in good soil and with full sunlight, the plants will grow rapidly and soon begin to flower. The male flowers appear first and may be batter-dipped and deep fried or stuffed with meat & rice and baked. The tender growing vine tips may be prepared as a green vegetable, steamed or boiled. Later in the season you will notice female flowers bearing their small promising fruit below them. Hand pollinating these flowers early in the morning will ensure maturing squash to arrive on a regular basis. Slice and use the young ones as a substitute for eggplant in parmesan dishes or cube and stew them with onions, peppers and tomatoes in olive oil until they are tender. Then sprinkler this ragout with grated cheese.

When the fruits fully mature, they become very hard and are colored orange, cream, white and green. Once clipped from the vine, they will hold very well for a long time in a cool, dry place before being used.

The deep orange flesh is a good source of Vitamin A. It is excellent boiled or microwaved in chunks and served with salt & pepper. Or go all the way and mash, adding heavy cream and/or butter before serving as a great side dish. You may also bake big pieces of the squash seasoned with butter, salt & pepper: taste bud ecstasy! Soups will thicken delectably with the addition of squash chunks.

Don't throw away the seeds, for they are the most nutritious of all. Salt and dry them on a cookie sheet. Placed in a preheated oven, they may pop like popcorn and become lightly browned. Store these snacks in Ziplock bags in the freezer – if you can refrain from eating them all at one sitting!

New plantings: Chinese vegetables, dill, fennel, mustards, lettuces, broccoli.

PROPAGATION

With this issue of our newsletter, we are beginning a series on Plant Propagation, seeds, roots, bulbs, corms, layering, cuttings, budding & grafting. This will go on for several years so it may behoove those who are interested to save each edition to make a booklet of propagation.

For page one, see "Tools and Equipment" on page 08-05.

Scheduled Speakers/Events:

- January 13: Har Mahdeem, horticulturist from S. Florida,
Topic: Annonas
- February 7-18: RFCI Horticulture Exhibit at the Florida State Fair
- February 10: Citrus Tasting at the Florida State Fair. No regular meeting.

RFCI Horticulture Display at the Florida State Fair: February 7-18, 2008.

We will need members to man the club's display. Free admission tickets to the fair will be given to members who volunteer to man the exhibit. A volunteer sign up sheet will be available at the January 13 meeting; or you may contact Charles Novak (813) 754-1399 to add your name to the list.

Citrus Tasting at the Florida State Fair: Sunday, February 10, 2008.

This will be our 7th year hosting this event. It has been very popular with the public as it gives them the opportunity to sample many varieties of citrus. Please plan to help with this event. **This year it is critical for members to donate citrus fruit (as many varieties as possible). Our three main sources for fruit in the past are no longer available.** If you have citrus to donate (or know of someone who will donate fruit) please contact Charles Novak, Paul Branesky or Bob Heath.

Also, volunteers are needed to help prepare the fruit for sampling. A sign up sheet will be available at the January 13 meeting, or you may contact Charles Novak or Bob Heath to volunteer or to get information. Volunteers will be given free admission tickets to the fair. There will be more information at the January meeting and in the February newsletter.

Tampa Bay RFCI Board of Directors Election in March: 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 as deemed necessary. The Board is responsible for the policies, finances and direction of the Chapter. A nominating committee will be appointed at the January Board meeting and members interested in serving on the Board may contact a member of the nominating committee. 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 membership present and voting.

New members: John Laurent Bartow Keith Davis Durham, NC

POLLINATING RARE FRUIT

By STEVE LOHN

Last year I had a passion fruit vine which covered the total length of my back fence, but only produced 2 fruit. What a disappointment! I removed it and planted another one in a different location. I thought changing the direction of the sun would have a positive effect. No luck! So as a last resort, I decided to try hand pollination. The following is what I've learned from a friend, Paul Allen Zmoda with the Tampa Bay Chapter. It's amazing what you can learn by belonging to a rare fruit club. Well, now I just have to wait and see if I did the hand pollination correctly.

There are a number of methods for pollinating fruit trees and most other plants. Insects, such as bees, butterflies & others are the most efficient pollinators. Honeybees are the most common method of pollen transfer for many fruit trees. As the honeybee searches for nectar in the flower, it brushes up against the stamen at the same time it leaves pollen on the stigma picked up from a flower previously visited.

Others rely on the wind, which may carry pollen from one tree to another of the same species. In this case the other trees need to be reasonably nearby for the pollen to reach them.

Yet others are self-pollinating; these trees have either male flowers which pollinate female flowers on the same tree, or flowers which have male & female parts and are self-pollinated.

In some cases where the trees are not native to this area, their native pollinator insects also may not be present. In this case our only choice is to pollinate by hand. Hand pollinating isn't too complicated once you understand the different parts of the flower and can recognize them.

There are two basic parts needed to pollinate any plant, the stigma (ovary) and the stamen (male organ). The idea is to collect pollen from the stamen and transfer it to the stigma. At the tip of the stamen is a small container which holds the pollen which can be either removed and dumped on the stigma of the same flower or another flower, or if you prefer, you may use a small brush (I use a women's makeup brush). The brush works best when the flower is too small to reach the pollen by hand. Though the stigma and the stamen may appear different on other plants, the principle remains the same.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Happy New Year, everyone. Let's welcome in 2008 and make it even better than 2007. We had our Holiday Social on Dec. 9th with large participation of members (over 120). In addition, we had as speaker Dr Campbell, who gave us a lot of insight on mangos. Dr Campbell travels widely and gave a very interesting view of the mango worldwide. It was such a fascinating presentation that the audience, as large as it was, listened, paid attention and was quiet. There was an abundance of food, desserts & wine for all to enjoy.

My thanks to all who contributed to make this Social a great success.

We have had a marvelous year with excursions to ECHO and Tree House Nursery, which everyone enjoyed – let's plan for another one in 2008. But first we need your help in February for the Citrus Celebration and the Horticulture Display at the State Fair. We need volunteers, so please sign up for your participation. We need donations of citrus fruit, so please call Charles Novak if you are able to donate. Let's get more involved and really make our club stand out. Thank you.

Tampa Bay RFCI website: www.rarefruit.org

The following is from an e-mail received Dec. 18, 2007.

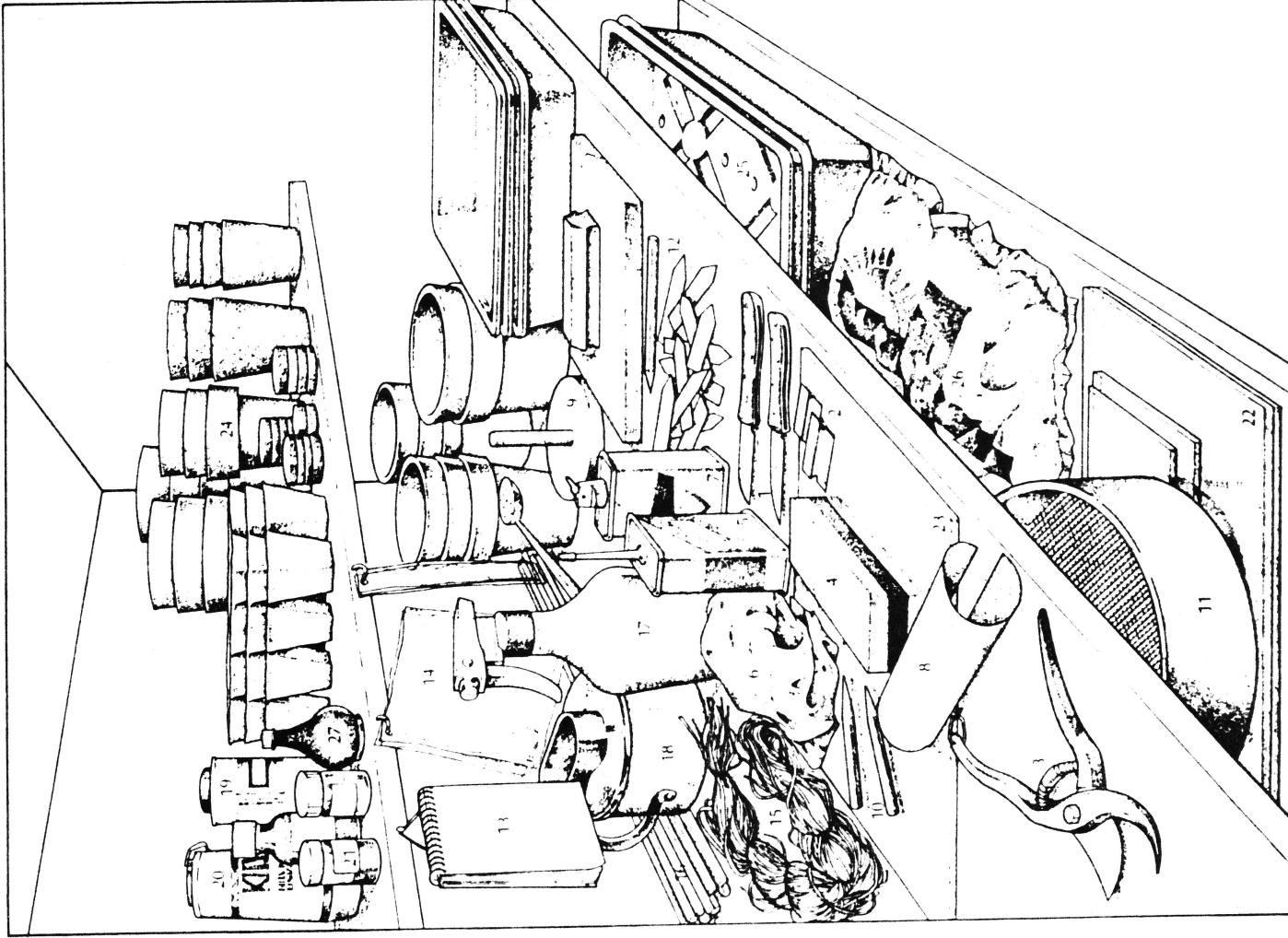
"I want to start off by saying your website has been a terrific tool for me. I found Rarefruit.org through a search engine and literally read through the entire site from top to bottom. I love to cook and plant my own flowers, fruits, and vegetables. Your website has been an amazing source of quality information. The "Tips" and "Guides" sections were so useful to me. I can't thank you enough!"

If you haven't been to the club's website, please check it out.

DECEMBER PLANT EXCHANGE

PLANT	DONOR	WINNER
Blackberry Jam Fruit	Bob Heath	Ed Musgrave
Yellow Passion Fruit	"	Zmoda
Yellow Passion Fruit	"	?
Pineapple	"	?
Pineapple	"	Mike Sweet
Hawaiian Chestnut	"	Lee Champagne
Rangpur Red Lime	"	?
Gac	"	Nguyen H.
Carissa	"	Ed Andrews
Carissa	"	?
Lemons bags	Vega	?
Avocados	"	Teri Worsham
Avocados	"	Sanda Worsham
Avocados	"	Bill Brown
Avocados	Vega	Weekley
Cassia shrub	Sharon Pilot	?
Grapefruit bag	?	R. Ferenzi
French Peanut	Atkins	?
Calamondin fruit	Andrews	?
Jasmine	"	?
Heliconia	"	?
Jackfruit	Mike Brandt	Shigeharu Sawada
Jackfruit	"	?
Jaboticaba	"	?
Indian River Red Grapefruit	B.Reddicliffe	?
Shooting Star	"	?
Loquat	"	?
Tabebuia Ipe Pink	"	A.J.Scharett
Surinam Cherry	Roberta Harris	Teresa Klingler
Miniature Pineapple	"	Weekley
Guava	Robert Klingler	Bob Heath
Plumeria white	J. Pope-Champagne	?
P. Reclinata	Mike Sweet	?
European Fan Palm	"	?
Poinsettia	Johnston	?
Chinese Squash	Zmoda	?
Brazilian Banana	Sharon Pilot	?
Praying Hands Banana	"	?
Devils Backbone	"	?

Tools and equipment



To propagate plants successfully, it is necessary to have a clean and tidy working area, efficient and effective tools and equipment and to follow a standardized procedure. Failure in any part of the system leads to frustration and, more importantly, delays that will reduce the probability of success.

Most important of the gardener's special tools and equipment for plant propagation are a sharp knife, a pair of shears, a dibble, suitable compost and a selection of pots and seed trays. Not all tools or fancy bits of equipment will necessarily enhance the success of propagation, but the important ones will because they make the gardener's job easier, and if the job is easier it often succeeds more readily.

The use of suitable tools gives the plant material the very best start. To avoid tearing and crushing, for example, always use a sharp knife or razor blade and a clean sheet of glass when preparing a softwood cutting for planting. If the plant material is damaged, it will die and become a site for possible rots to infect the cutting. By the same token it is important

Basic tools and equipment

- Knives (1), safety razor blades (2) and shears (3)
- Sharpening stone (4)
- Oil for lubrication (5)
- Cleaning rags (6), solvent (7) and emery paper (8)
- Pressers (various) for firming compost (9)
- Dibbles (10)
- Sieve ($\frac{1}{4}$ in mesh) (11)
- Labels and soft lead pencil (12)
- Notebook for records (13)
- Polyethylene bags and tape (14)
- Rafia, twine, etc. (15)
- Split canes 12 in or 15 in (16)
- Hand sprayer (17)
- Watering can (18)
- Fungicides (19)
- Pesticides (20)
- Rooting powders (21)
- Panes of glass for covering seed trays (22)
- Panes of glass for cutting (23)
- Pots (24) and seed trays (25)
- Composts (26) and fertilizer (27)

not to push a cutting into the compost; always first make a hole with a dibble of suitable size, and then plant the cutting in that hole. A dibble should be approximately the same diameter as the cutting to be planted.

Although many people will use a kitchen table, drain-board or greenhouse bench, the most suitable place to make cuttings, graft or sow seeds is a bench in the garden shed with a convenient shelf for all the bits and pieces of equipment, tools, rooting powders, etc. The height of the bench will be a critical factor to the comfort of the gardener if considerable time is to be spent propagating or potting plants. Incorrectly sited benches will encourage or enhance backaches and cricks in the neck. It is also important to have good lighting placed directly over the workbench itself.

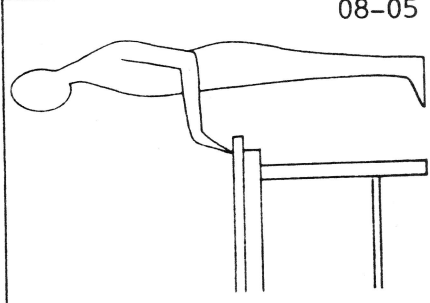
Plant propagation in many ways is akin to surgery, and nowhere is there more routine and standardized procedure than in an operating theater—where all concentration is centered on the patient.

Therefore the secret of success for a gardener lies in having all the required tools and equipment readily to hand and clean and in good working order, so that any technique of propagation can proceed smoothly and all concentration can be centered on the plant material.

After use it is important to clean, service and restore all equipment to its correct place so that it is readily accessible.

WORKBENCHES

To find the correct height for your workbench, stand up straight, drop your arms to the side; then raise your forearms at right angles to your body and drop your wrists—the bench should be at the height indicated by your fingertips.



MANGOS

by Dr. Richard Campbell of Fairchild Gardens

Mangos, one of the world's principal and most important fruits. Dr Campbell indicated that he would be talking about mangos of the world and he would show us how it all ties back to Florida. The mango in the western hemisphere started right here on Pinellas Point in 1850 when the first mango was sent to Cuba. It got a boost around 1880 with the accidental encounter between the old Turpentine and Mulgoba mangos. Fibrous, spicy Turpentine from the Caribbean lowlands and the refined, smooth fleshed and delicate Mulgoba of India joined together under the swaying coconuts of West Palm Beach. It remained unheralded for more than a decade until 1910 when the progeny of this union was revealed to the world: the Hayden mango. Entrusted to Mrs Florence Hayden, it embodied the best traits of both its parents. The Hayden thrived in her homeland, quickly dominating the industry of Florida. The Hayden proved to be a good parent, giving rise to the most important export mango cultivars in the world. From the seeds of Hayden came the sweet flavored Kent of Miami, the pastel hued Keitt of Homeland land the gorgeous Tommy Atkins of Ft Lauderdale, which were soon to become the most important export mangos in the western hemisphere.

The mango is native to the seasonally dry plains of India and the humid tropical forests of Southeast Asia and has been integral to the culture and lives of tropical & subtropical people worldwide for over 4000 years. Centuries ago it spread to a broad band bounded by the Tropic of Cancer to the north & Capricorn to the south where it became a key component of home gardens and commercial orchards. Today the mango has ascended to a position of prominence and is consistently found in retail markets all over the world. It fits well in both tropical home gardens and commercial systems. Dr Campbell said they hope to provide an understanding of modern mango culture and what is required to successfully grow fruit and enjoy the "king of fruit".

The tree forms a dense rounded canopy of 65' or more in height and nearly equal spread if not

managed. The leaves are leathery, 5" to 15" in length, and remain on the tree for a year or more. New leaves are reddish in color, gradually turning to a deep green when fully mature. There may be up to 6 growth flushes per year in the tropics during the warm & wet season. Individual flowers are small, pinkish white and are born in large branched panicles. Pollination is by insects, but less than 1% of the flowers mature to form fruit. Trees & fruit have latex, which can cause allergic reactions in susceptible persons. Those sensitive should wear gloves when working with the trees or fruit, or have others peel the fruit for them. Once peeled, the mango flesh doesn't cause allergic reactions in most people.

The mango grows and fruits best at elevations of sea level up to 1600', rarely at higher elevations. The highest fruit production & best quality are obtained in hot climates with mean monthly temperatures of 75 to 85 deg.F. The tree can survive a short exposure of 32 deg.F. Temperature of 28 deg. will cause the death of blooms, fruit, leaves, twigs & branches. Extended exposure to lower temperatures can kill young trees or cause serious damage. A dormant period with no vegetative growth for 2 to 3 months is needed to achieve a concentrated bloom, as caused by temperatures of 60 to 70 deg.F or a dry period. Excessive cloud cover or tree shading will result in fruit with poor color and reduced sugar content. The best growth and fruiting are obtained with an annual rainfall of 20 to 40". It is desirable if the rainfall occurs in a distinct wet & dry cycle. Sandy soil with good drainage is best with a pH of 6 to 7. Otherwise, horticultural supplements or micro nutrients may be needed.

Mangos generally ripen over a 3 to 5 month period in the warm season & can be grouped as early, middle & late season. The calendar date for ripening for each cultivar can vary up to a month or more between years, depending on the bloom date & weather conditions during development. An elite group of cultivars, including Tommy Atkins & Keitt, are noteworthy in yielding an average of 200 to 300 lbs. per tree, suiting them for large scale commercial production. Modest yielding cultivars such as Edward & Nam Doc Mai may be grown for their superior flavor, but a realistic yield would be 50 to 100 lbs. per tree.

Mangos are green, yellow or red, with or without colorful blushes. Aromas are subtle to intense and range from fruity to resinous. Flesh texture & fiber content are highly variable and the range of flavor among cultivars defies description.

The Alphonse mango is among the finest of Indian dessert mangos. Fruit average about 10 oz. and are bright yellow with a pink blush on the sun exposed side. The ripening fruit perfume the air with a wonderful sweet & fruity aroma. The flavor is intensely sweet, rich & full, with multiple aromatic overtones & a hint of citrus. Alphonse should be harvested mature green & is best eaten out of hand. It should not be refrigerated prior to ripening for the best flesh texture, flavor & aroma.

Neelum is a south Indian dessert mango. Small, about 9 oz., bright yellow with a deep orange flesh. The flesh is rich & aromatic, firm and suited for slicing and use in fruit salads. Small tree size, disease tolerance & late season uniquely suit Neelum for home gardens.

Mallika is among the best of a new generation of Indian dessert mangos. The tree is small, making it attractive to commercial & home gardeners. The bright yellow fruit averages about 15 oz. with deep orange flesh & an intense sweet, rich & highly aromatic flavor. It should be harvested green on the tree & kept non refrigerated at a temperature of about 70 deg. for 2 to 3 weeks for proper ripening. It is best consumed fresh out of hand but excels in juices & dehydrated slices.

The Kensington mango is dominant in Australia. The fruit weighs about a pound with a smooth bright yellow skin & a red blush on the sun exposed portion. Lemon yellow flesh is soft & juicy with a sweet aromatic flavor revered in the region. It is consumed ripe out of hand & is also well suited for pickles & sweet preserves at the firm green stage.

The Nam Doc Mai is among the best known dessert mango of Thailand. The fruit are long & slender, weighing about 14 oz. & range from greenish to canary yellow rarely with a pink blush. The fruit, eaten fresh out of hand, is soft & silky with a sweet aromatic flavor & alluring bouquet.

The Golek dominates the local market & home gardens in Indonesia. This small mango, 8 oz., is elongated & light green in color with a burnt orange shoulder. The deep orange flesh is soft & juicy with a rich spicy aromatic flavor & some fiber. It has superior disease tolerance, which gives it potential in the lowland humid tropics of the world.

The Manila is among the finest flavored cultivars grown in Mexico, long & slender with a weight of about 12 oz. It is orange yellow with a pink blush. Its soft & juicy, deep yellow flesh is fresh and has set a standard for excellence in eating quality in Mexico.

Julie, a traditional dessert fruit of Jamaica, with a flattened oval shape, averages about 9 oz. They vary when ripe from green to burnt orange. The orange flesh is juicy & completely without fiber. It has a deep rich spicy flavor.

The Tommy Atkins, with its stunning red color, heavy production & disease tolerance, dominates the commercial export market of the western hemisphere. The fruit averages about 20 oz., is a dark red color with a flesh that has a firm texture due to a fine unobjectionable fiber. The fruit flavor is only fair to good but its yield, production, color, disease tolerance & shipping characteristics outweigh its shortcomings.

The Keitt mango is large, weighing about 30 oz. with a yellowish green color & slightly pink blush. The flesh is lemon yellow, firm & juicy with a mild sweet flavor. It is among the heaviest bearing of cultivars, highly adaptable to many climates & is tolerant of disease & rough handling. It is a late season mango used at the firm green stage for pickles in ethnic Asian markets.

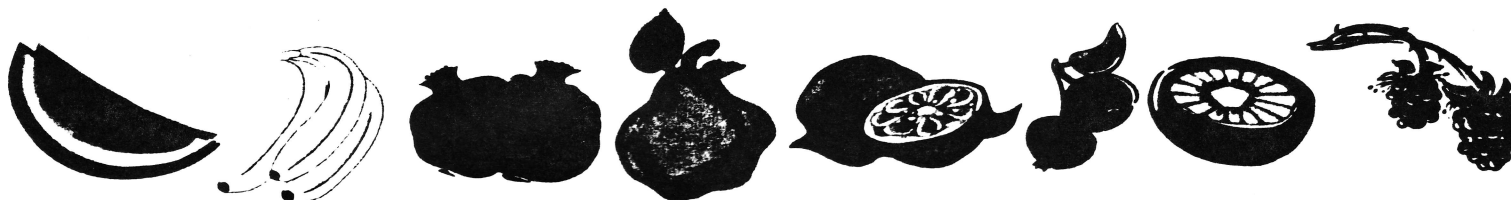
The Kent is another large mango, 28 oz. average, with a deep crimson blush overlaid by numerous small yellow dots. In subtropical climates, the fruit often retains a green color even when fully ripe. The deep orange flesh is soft, melting & juicy with an exceptional rich sweet flavor to be eaten out of hand, in juices or dehydrated.

The Glenn is oval & weighs about 18 oz. with a bright yellow color & pastel orange-red blush overlaid by small yellow dots. The deep yellow flesh is soft & silky with a rich, sweet, aromatic flavor & fruity aroma. It is a favorite in home gardens due to its consistent production, disease

tolerance & superb eating quality. It is produced on a limited basis in South America for the export market.

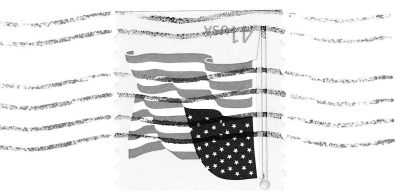


Go Green... Plant More Trees



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