RFCI NEWSLETTER MAY 2008
TAMPA BAY CHAPTER of the
RARE FRUIT COUNCIL INTERNATIONAL INC

EDITORS: BOB HEATH, PAULA HARDWICK, CHARLES NOVAK, LINDA NOVAK
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: MAY 11

PROGRAM: THIS MONTH, AS USUAL ON MOTHERS' DAY, OUR SPEAKER WILL BE OUR GOOD FRIEND FROM PALM BEACH COUNTY, GENE JOYNER. Gene's visits to our meetings are always enjoyed by our members, as he is a knowledgeable authority on tropical fruiting trees. At this meeting he will mostly be discussing the Myrtaceae family, providing a slide presentation on the growing and care of this vast family; guava, feijoa, rose apple, jaboticaba, Malay apple & grumichama, to name a few. He will be available to answer questions and identify plants if you have questions that need answers or plants that need identifying.

We'll have our usual impressive tasting table & plant raffle. Please contribute. Our farmers market will be open to those who are selling fruit, vegetables or preserves. It should be an exceptionally good meeting, so we expect to see a large crowd, even though it is Mothers' Day, and we suggest that members bring their mothers.

For the benefit of new members, directions to our meeting are on page 08-37.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

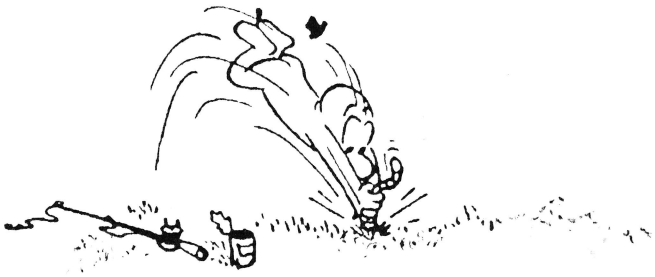
We enjoyed a very successful Spring Plant Sale at USF. On Saturday the weather was beautiful, resulting in a large turnout and lots of sales.

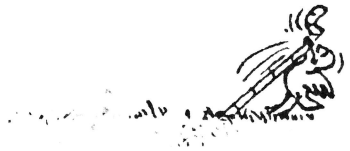
My thanks to all the members who participated and helped customers select fruit trees and then encouraged them, leading to happy smiling people in possession of a plant or two.

I would like to encourage our membership to participate in these sales; as members we should share the responsibility that brings funds to our club and share our knowledge of plants with others – to instill others with our enthusiasm. I see the same faces at the plant sales and would like to see some new faces.

Please send in your photos to enter our annual plant photo contest. Directions are in the newsletter. Send in a maximum of 5 photos. Membership will decide winners by voting.

I am sorry to have to miss the next meeting with Mr. Joyner; however, I will be in Surinam and have asked the board members to handle the meeting.





WHAT'S HAPPENING

Apr-May 2008

By PAUL ZMODA

Where do new varieties of fruits come from? Many are chosen from a batch of seedlings whose genetic composition (each largely unique) makes their ultimate quality mostly a random crap shoot. A few are superior, the majority are average, and some are, well, crap.

Trees are exposed to their life-giving source of energy – the sun. The sun's energy is not only white light but other kinds of stronger radiation. If a portion of living plant material should receive a strike by a gamma ray or other particle, the DNA in the plant cells may be altered, if not destroyed. Sometimes this reprogrammed DNA goes on to express new traits on that portion of the plant. We might notice these traits are not only different from the norm, but may be advantageous, such as earlier or later ripening of fruit, fruit flesh color, texture, flavor, etc.

This may be the way that pigmented grapefruit cultivars (from CULtivated VARiety) came about. Other forms of natural radiation such as radon, radium, uranium, phosphorus, etc.) could presumably be involved. These kinds of new varieties usually begin life as localized mutations called "sports".

Astute growers are keenly aware of this natural phenomenon and may select new varieties by watching for any unusual behavior among the branches.

Recently, I noticed an interesting citrus mutation on our red Navel orange tree. One branch is showing a whitish stripe on one side and an adjacent bud is sprouting which exhibits variegation (partial chlorophyll production); the leaves are partly green and partly white.

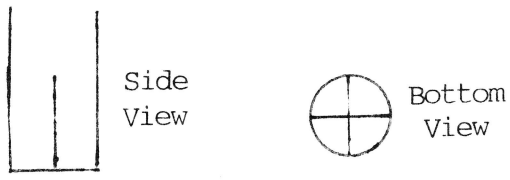
If all goes well, I can graft this sport onto a rootstock of its own later and study it as it grows into a new tree.

THE O'HEARN METHOD

by PAUL ZMODA

This method of preparing cuttings was told to me by Mr Crafton Clift, who recently spoke to our group. While instructing his friend, Rita O'Hearn, on how to slice the lower ends of cutting material, she misinterpreted his words. Crafton said to slice off, down to the cambium on four sides:

In her effort, she sliced completely through the bottom ends thusly:



When these two methods were set out in rooting medium, it was later found that her method was superior in the results: roots forming were far more numerous on her "mistakes". Serendipity at its finest!

Programs/Events:

May 11: Gene Joyner of Unbelievable Acres in W. Palm Beach
The MYRTACEAE Family (guava, jaboticaba, feijoa, grumichama, etc.)

June 8: Propagation Workshop

New members:

Ronald & Debra Altic	Clearwater	Lolita Harris	Tampa
George Schultz	Oldsmar	Kathy Borman	Tampa
Doug & Nicole Baldwin	Tampa	Steve Costello	Lutz
Glenn & Linda Collett	Temple Terrace	John Paulk	Tampa
Lanita Fortenberry	San Antonio	Kyle Foster	Valrico
Anserd Fraser	Clearwater	Janice Shindle	Tampa
Radha – Ramki Kanuri	Odessa	Chris Tyler	Odessa
Arvind & Ila Patel	Tampa	Ben Santos	Hernando

RARE FRUIT CONFERENCE **Fruit & Spice Park, Homestead, FL** **July 9 – 13, 2008**

Tentative Schedule:

July 9, Wednesday.	Early registration, self-guided tour of Redland Fruit Production, tour the Fruit & Spice Park.
July 10, Thursday.	Tour Research Gardens, Park tour and optional evening Tropical Fruit discussion.
July 11, Friday.	Tour University of Florida Station in Homestead. Visit a local tropical fruit winery, and local fruit nurseries. Banquet and key note Speaker
July 12, Saturday.	Morning is free so those who wish may visit Mango morning at Fairchild Tropical Garden, tour the Kampong, evening tour of The Fruit & Spice Park, banquet, evening speaker and fruit tasting.
July 13, Sunday.	9:00 AM to 3:00 PM –Speakers. Conference closes.

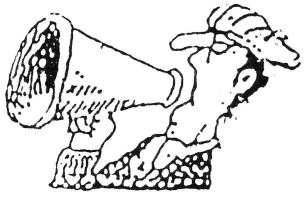
For more information contact the Fruit & Spice Park, (305) 247-5727
24801 SW 187 Ave. fsp@miamidade.gov
Homestead, FL 33031

A STANDARD FLOWER SHOW

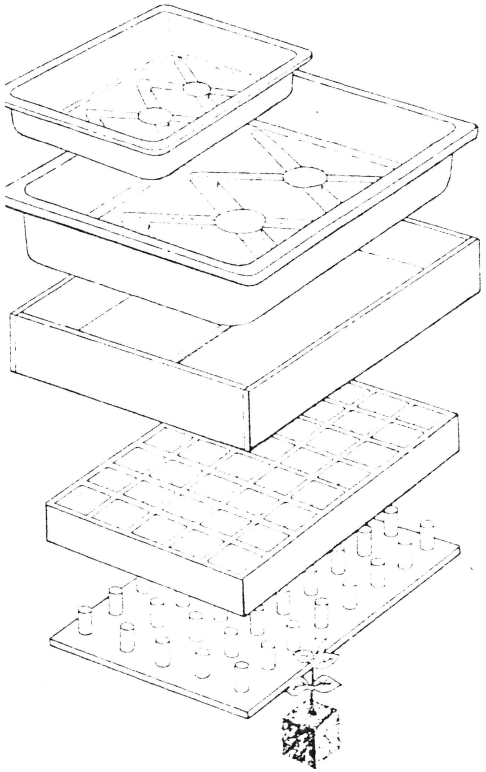
The Tampa RFCI was again invited to place an exhibit in The Tampa Federation of Garden Club Circles Flower Show, April 12-13. The theme of the show was "Around our Garden in 80 Years" as the Tampa Federation of Garden Club Circles, Inc. was formed on Jan. 31, 1928. The extent and variety of lovely flowers and ornamental plantings were a pleasure to view. Charles & Linda Novak and Bob Heath set up our informative and impressive exhibit. A special *thanks* to Bob and Irene Rubenstein for manning the exhibit and answering the many questions from the public. Our exhibit received the orchid Award of Appreciation ribbon.

MEMBERS CORNER

WANTED: Budwood of Tarocco and Budd blood oranges. Paul Zmoda, Flatwoodsfarm@AOL.com or 813-677-5985.



Containers 2



Seed trays

When dealing with relatively large numbers of seedlings or cuttings, as happens often in the production of bedding plants, a tray may be a more suitable container than a pot.

Traditionally a seed tray is made of soft wood and its dimensions are 14 in by 8½ in and, according to its required usage, either 2 in or 2½ in deep. These trays are now relatively expensive to purchase and their expected life is fairly short as they rot easily. However, they have the distinct advantage of being firm and rigid.

Plastic seed trays of the same basic dimensions are currently available in many different patterns. The most important characteristic is the degree of drainage permitted in these, and it is of paramount importance to ensure that this is adequate. The quality and variety of plastics used for making seed trays is extraordinarily variable: the best trays are those of a sufficiently thick quality to keep their shape when picked up at a corner and of a type not to become brittle on exposure to ultraviolet light. The advantage of plastics is, of course, their durability and that they can be readily cleaned. Plastic seed trays are also made in "half-tray" sizes measuring 6 in by 8½ in and 2 in deep.

There are many other materials such as compressed peat, processed paper and expanded polystyrene used for seed trays, but they tend to require careful handling. Some trays are disposable, which overcomes the hygiene problem but inevitably increases the cost factor. Expanded polystyrene trays with individual growing compartments for each seed or cutting retain warmth and so promote rapid growth.

As with pots, many containers such as wooden "Dutch" tomato trays, fish boxes and molded polystyrene packaging can be substituted for conventional seed trays provided they have adequate drainage and they are properly cleaned before use.

Peat pellets and soil blocks

As an alternative to pots and trays it is possible to substitute a system that obviates their use: the idea simply being to plant out or pot on the entire unit. This is achieved by eliminating a pot altogether, either by using a peat compost, compressed into a pellet and contained within a net, that swells up when soaked with water, or by compressing the compost into blocks.

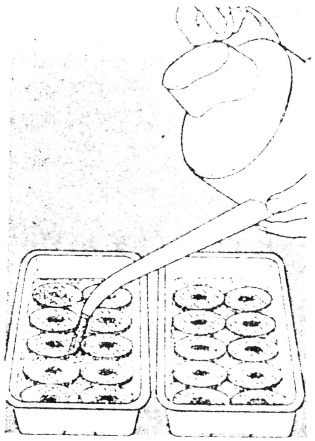
These systems are useful, very effective and reduce the ultimate root disturbance to a minimum, which means the growth of the young plants is not checked when they are transplanted.

The compressed peat pellets as typified by the "Jiffy 7" are expensive but seem to work very well, and if used for small seedlings or sturdy cuttings appear almost to enhance rooting.

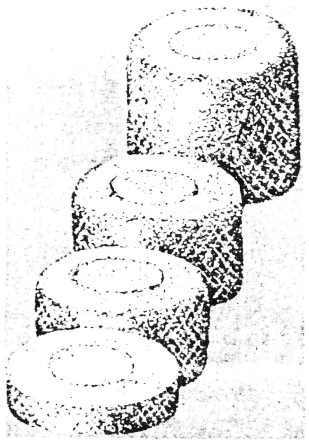
The high initial cost of purchasing a soil block mold may deter many gardeners who do not propagate large quantities of cuttings and seedlings. It is best to make hexagonal soil blocks as they do not dry out so readily provided their sides touch each other. To make a soil block successfully it is important to ensure that the compost has the correct level of dampness. To test this, take a handful of moist compost. Squeeze gently but firmly; the compost should tend to crumble. If it falls apart, the material is too dry; if it does not start to crumble, it is too moist.

Fill the mold with the compost, compressing it only until the particles form a block. Place the soil block on a tray and leave it to consolidate for 24 hours before inserting a seed or cutting. As the plant grows the roots hold the block together. Plant out as soon as the roots emerge through the sides of the soil block.

Peat pellets



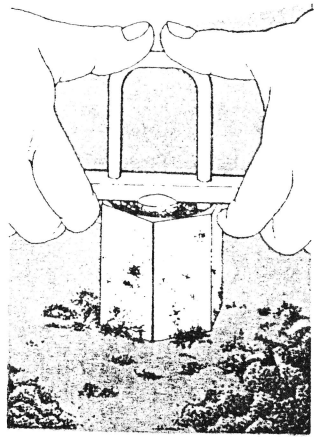
1 Place the pellets in a watertight container. Pour water slowly round the pellets. Leave to expand.



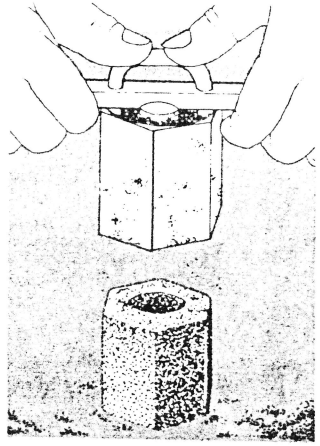
2 Sow the seeds or cuttings once the pellets have fully absorbed the correct amount of water.

3 Plant out as soon as roots emerge through the sides of the netting.

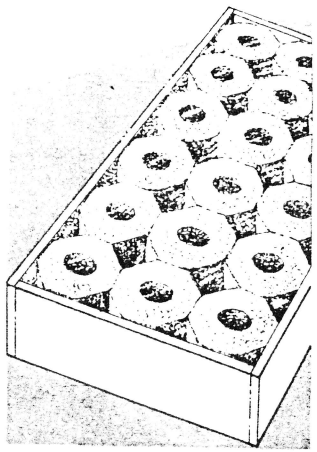
Soil blocks



1 Hold the soil block mold with one hand on either side. Push the mold into some damp compost.



2 Release from the mold when full, and stand on a tray. Leave to consolidate for about 24 hours.



3 Insert a seed or cutting and cover with compost. Ensure that the sides of the soil blocks are touching.

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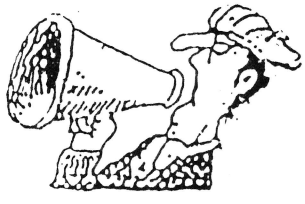


Composts

Basically a compost is a soil substitute for propagating and establishing plants. To carry out this function a compost requires certain properties—to be well aerated, to retain water, to hold nutrients and to conduct warmth. Thus in constituting a compost the components used should be chosen to establish these particular conditions as well as maintaining them throughout the life of the compost. In order to prevent the occurrence of pests, diseases and weeds the component materials should also be sterile.

The only component of a compost that is not initially sterile is the loam. To sterilize it place the loam in a broad, flat container such as a meat tin and put in the oven at 82 C 180 F for 30 minutes. Best results are obtained if the loam is dryish and if the tin is covered with foil so that the steam generated encourages the sterilizing effect. Cool and riddle the loam before use.

Cuttings compost

The formulation of a compost for rooting cuttings really only requires two considerations: the retention of sufficient moisture to help prevent desiccation of the cutting, and the provision of an aerating agent so that air can always circulate within the medium.

Conventionally, peat has been used as the water-retentive component and, although various peats are available, sphagnum moss peat is best as it retains a good structure for a long period. For most reliable use and to achieve uniformity it should be riddled through a $\frac{1}{4}$ in sieve.

Sand is used as the aerating agent, and it also allows adequate drainage—peat by itself tending to become waterlogged. In horticultural parlance sand usually means grit, and for these purposes a washed and crushed lime-free grit providing a particle size of between $\frac{1}{8}$ in and $\frac{1}{16}$ in across is the most desirable. The particles should also be "sharp," that is they should not be rounded but have points and corners and thus be irregular in shape.

Although these two components provide the basic compost they can be substituted with such items as sedge peat, well-weathered sawdust, perlite, vermiculite and graded coal dust—in fact by any material that has suitable physical properties, and that is chemically inactive and biologically more or less sterile.

Cuttings composts are usually formulated by evenly mixing equal parts by volume of peat and grit, although it is often difficult to assess how much sieved peat there is in a particular mix. In the end there is no substitute to determining the "feel" of the compost and whether it has the right properties.

Compost for germinating seedlings

The composition of a compost for seedling germination does not differ greatly from that produced for cuttings, except that a little more attention needs to be paid to the nutrient and chemical aspects.

The basic components are peat and sand and for germination pure and simple this is sufficient. However if the seedlings are to remain in the compost for some time, add loam to act as a buffer in holding nutrients and controlling drying out. The amount of sterilized loam required need not be great: a formula of 2 parts by volume peat, 2 parts sand and 1 part loam is satisfactory.

As seeds are much more sensitive to the acidity in such a compost lime in the form of ground limestone should be mixed in with the sand at the rate of $1\frac{1}{2}$ oz per bushel of compost.

Although it is not usual to include complicated nutrient mixes in seed composts, it is important to ensure that sufficient phosphate is available. Therefore also mix $\frac{3}{4}$ oz superphosphate per bushel of compost in with the sand.

Potting composts for growing on young plants

The formulation of composts for the establishment and growing on of young plants follows on from seed composts in much the same pattern. It is necessary to prepare a compost that allows the development of a root system; contains adequate water to support the plants and sufficient nutrients not to check growth; has a suitable acidity/alkalinity status; and does not dry out too easily.

Nowadays such composts are based on the use of peat, although traditionally the John Innes concepts were based on the use of sterilized loam. The recommendation of loam as a base for composts has had to be discontinued because it is no longer feasible to obtain a standard material on which a recipe can be formulated. Peat is capable of being relatively standardized and so currently forms the basis. It is important, however, to realize that loam has a steadying and controlling influence on both water and nutrient availability that peat does not provide, and so peat-based (that is, loamless) composts require a higher degree of management and maintenance. Therefore it is prudent to use loam as a minor component merely to provide the buffering action and so ease management. In practice the aim is to produce a loamless compost with added loam!

Young plants also need nutrient in the compost and this should be added at the rate of 4 oz fertilizer base per bushel of compost unless the manufacturer recommends otherwise.

There are, of course, many available proprietary brands of peat-based composts, all of which have been tried and tested successfully. Their main disadvantage is their capacity for drying out and the difficulty of rewetting a dried compost, although this latter factor is less of a problem if a wetting agent has been incorporated. Their chief advantage is that they are ready mixed and come packed in handy-sized plastic bags.

If a peat-based compost proves difficult to rewet, then add a small quantity of wetting agent or spreader such as soft soap. Do not use wash-up liquids.

How to mix composts

The important aspect of mixing compost is to obtain an even and uniform end product. Thorough mixing of the ingredients is essential. It is also easier if you have a bushel or half-bushel box on which to base the formula as lime and fertilizers are normally added at a bushel rate. (A bushel is the amount that will fit into a box 22 in × 10 in × 10 in without compacting.)

Evenly layer the ingredients into a pile on a clean concrete floor. The lime and fertilizers should be sprinkled into each sand layer. The whole should then be well mixed with a clean shovel.

INGREDIENTS FOR VARIOUS COMPOSTS
(parts by volume)

Cuttings compost
Equal parts peat (sifted) and sand ($\frac{1}{8}$–$\frac{1}{16}$ in grade)

Compost for germinating seedlings
2 parts peat (sifted)
2 parts sand ($\frac{1}{8}$–$\frac{1}{16}$ in grade)
1 part loam (sterilized)
and $1\frac{1}{2}$ oz ground limestone
and $\frac{3}{4}$ oz superphosphate
per bushel of compost

Potting composts for young plants

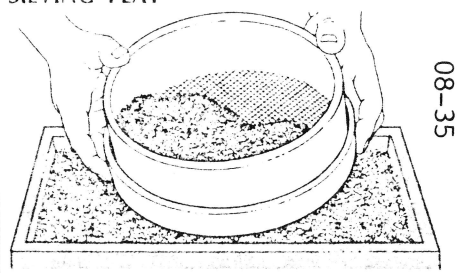
JOHN INNES No. 1 POTTING COMPOST
2 parts loam (sterilized)
3 parts peat (sifted)
2 parts sand ($\frac{1}{8}$–$\frac{1}{16}$ in grade)
and $\frac{3}{4}$ oz ground limestone
and 4 oz J. I. fertilizer base
per bushel of compost

LOAMLESS POTTING COMPOST
3 parts peat (sifted)
1 part sand ($\frac{1}{8}$–$\frac{1}{16}$ in grade)
and 4 oz any fertilizer base
and 4 oz ground limestone
per bushel of compost

LOAMLESS POTTING COMPOST WITH LOAM
7 parts peat (sifted)
2 parts sand ($\frac{1}{8}$–$\frac{1}{16}$ in grade)
1 part loam (sterilized)
and 4 oz any fertilizer base
and 4 oz ground limestone
per bushel of compost

For ericaceous composts, omit lime.

SIEVING PEAT



Riddle peat through a $\frac{1}{4}$ in sieve before mixing thoroughly with other ingredients to make the required compost.

JOKES...

Where has Mombin? Looking for Pawpaw!

*

A skunk believed in reincarnation. When he died, he came back as a muskmellon!

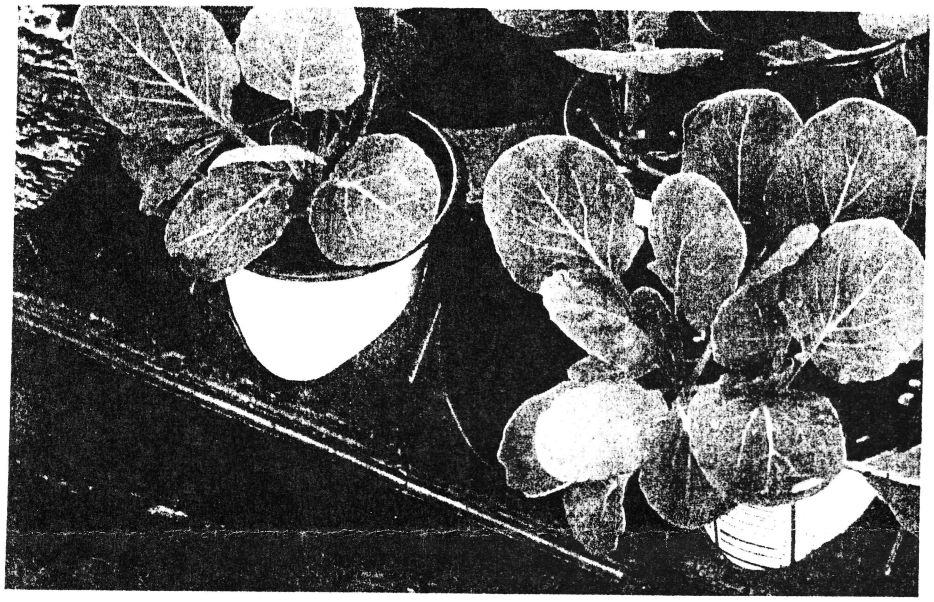
*

I think I have some ill trees. A horticulturist told me I have a horse chestnut and a sycamore!

* * *

Solving the Container Conundrum

by Rita Pelczar



IT'S A gardener's quandary: As you add new plants to the garden each year, what do you do with all the used containers? If you're like me, the resulting stack of empty pots, cell packs, and flats is way more than you can reuse before it starts to grow again the following fall or spring. And forget giving them to your neighbors—most of them face the same problem.

The accumulation of used containers in your garage or garden shed is a snapshot of a much larger issue. They take up lots of space, and too many of them are finding their way to local landfills. There are alternatives.

REUSING PLASTIC POTS

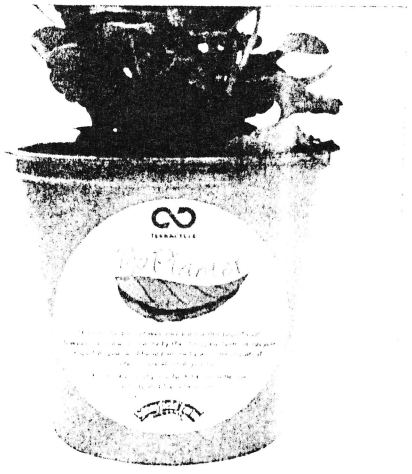
According to a 2004 estimate by Penn State University's College of Agricultural Science, each year 320 million pounds of plastic are used to produce nursery pots, cell packs, and flats. Most of these products are reusable or recyclable.

The major concern with reusing plastic containers is that diseases may be spread through the soil residue left behind after the plant is removed. Large scale cleaning and disinfecting is costly and time consuming. This is not the case in the home garden where a good scrubbing of each used pot in a 10-percent bleach solution is a fairly simple chore. A gardener may then reuse the old pots or donate them to schools or local organizations that can use them. Some nurseries accept their own used containers if you return them cleaned.

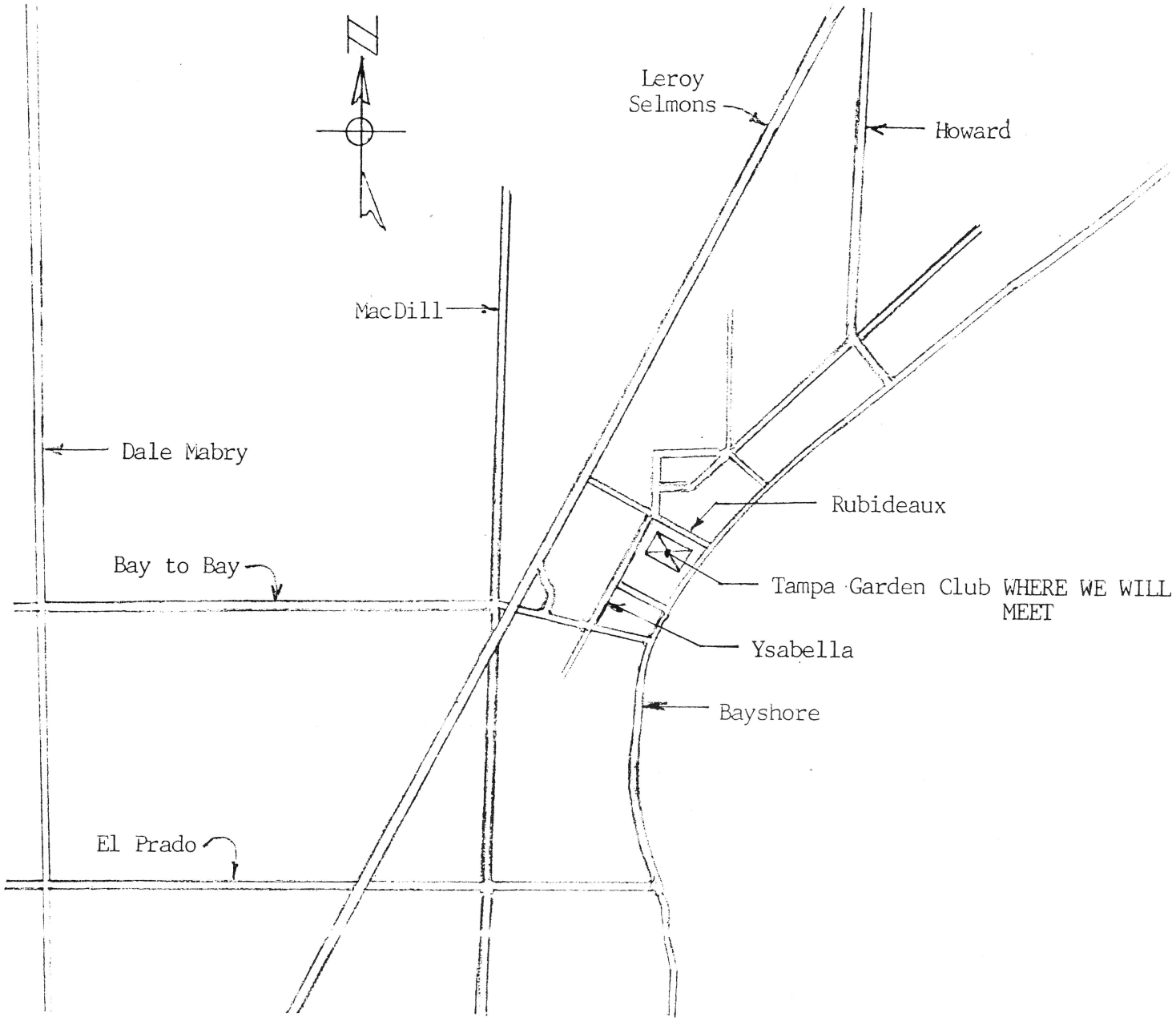
In addition to reusing plant containers, non-plant containers sometimes find a new lease on life as plant pots. Many plastic deli and snack food containers are great for starting seeds indoors, after they are cleaned and outfitted with a few drainage holes. Small yogurt cups can be used for starting seeds or cuttings; larger yogurt containers accommodate young plants until they are ready for transplanting into the garden.

Last September, TerraCycle, a company that produces organic fertilizer in recycled soda bottles, began a program with Stonyfield Farm called the "Yogurt Brigade" that collects yogurt containers from schools and various non-profit groups for recycling as plant pots. The containers are collected, cleaned, and shipped in boxes supplied by TerraCycle; each box holds 400 yogurt containers. And for each container collected, Stonyfield donates two to five cents, depending on its size, to the charitable organization or school selected by the collecting group.

According to TerraCycle publicist Albe Zakes, more than 180 groups from North Carolina to Maine, and west to Ohio, have participated to date. Once TerraCycle receives the cleaned containers, two drainage holes are drilled in the bottom of each, then they are airbrushed in different colors to make them more attractive. The re-designed containers will be distributed to nurseries for sale as plant pots. "We're hoping to have our first shipment out in February," says Zakes. For more information about the program, or to learn how to get involved, visit *www.terracycle.net/brigades*.



Yogurt containers can be reused as planters.



Directions to the Tampa Garden Club: 2629 Bayshore Blvd., Tampa

FROM NORTHEAST:

Take I-275 to Armenia Ave / Howard Ave exit (Exit 42).
Take Armenia south to West Swann Ave (1.2 miles).
Turn Left (east) on W. Swann Ave. Go 0.1 mile to first light (South Howard Ave).
Turn Right (south) on S. Howard, go 0.8 mile to Bayshore Blvd.
Turn Right (west) on Bayshore Blvd. Go 0.4 mile to the Tampa Garden Club.
Parking is in the rear. PARKING DIRECTIONS: Turn Right (north) on West Rubideaux St., go one block to Ysabella Ave. Turn Left (west) on Ysabella. Enter parking lot at the second gate on Left side of street.

FROM NORTHWEST OR SOUTH:

Take Dale Mabry or MacDill, turn East on Bay to Bay Blvd.
Pass under Leroy Selmon Expressway.
Turn Left (North) on Ysabella.
Enter Tampa Garden Club after Barcelona, before Rubideaux St.

THE SEVEN YEAR LIMA

The Seven-Year Lima, named for its extraordinary ability to produce for 7 years, shows great promise for the developing world. A distinct quality of this bean is its ability to smother and suppress weeds while providing continual forage for animals, protein for humans, a dense cover crop for tropical dry regions and a green manure that adds nitrogen to the soil. The beans are characterized by vigorous vining growth that develops into a thick mat about 2 feet high. It is fairly drought resistant and tolerant of a wide variety of soil types. Pods are produced continually throughout the plant's life with beans ready to harvest after 3 to 5 months. The seeds are easy to collect and can be kept in cool, dry storage for many years.

Seven year lima should be soaked 4 to 6 hours before cooking, then boiled for 1-1/2 hours. Discard the water before eating. Beans and leaves should never be eaten raw because they contain a toxin, hydrocyanic acid, which is removed with soaking and cooking. The lima beans are a nice protein addition to soups, stews and casseroles.

For more information, visit ECHO's technical resource website at www.echotech.org.

A GUIDE TO TROPICAL FRUIT TREES & VINES continued

122. *Psidium Cattleianum (littorale)* - Cattley guava, Strawberry guava

Small, evergreen tree to 25 feet, native to Brazil. Leaves are dark green, leathery and waxy to 3 inches in length. Individual flowers are white and about 1 inch across. Reddish fruit is about 1-1/2 inches in length. Its whitish pulp is eaten fresh, as juice, jellies and preserves. Plants will tolerate temperatures in the mid-twenties and are useful for landscape purposes. New plants are started from seed, cuttings, or layers. Some varieties bear yellow fruit and are known as yellow cattley guava.

FIRST CLASS MAIL

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