



# RFCI

## NEWSLETTER

TAMPA BAY CHAPTER of the  
RARE FRUIT COUNCIL INTERNATIONAL INC

OCTOBER 2008

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MEETINGS ARE HELD THE 2<sup>nd</sup> SUNDAY OF THE MONTH @ 2:00 PM

NEXT MEETING: OCT 11 & 12 @ USF (SEE BELOW)

PROGRAM: THE USF FALL PLANT FESTIVAL IS SCHEDULED FOR OCTOBER 11 & 12. Consequently, we will forego our usual monthly meeting which would be on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday, Oct 12, to participate in the USF Plant Festival. All members are invited to participate and bring plants to donate or sell. Parking is free but admission is \$4.00, for which the Club will reimburse workers who participate in the Sale. This is an interesting affair and well worth the admission. Likewise, it is a social event as well as a money maker for the Club. We will have no tasting table or plant raffle. But we desperately need workers. Let's make this USF Sale our big one. Please join us!

### USF FALL PLANT FESTIVAL

The RFCI will participate in the USF Plant Festival on OCT. 11 & 12, 2008. This is an important fund raiser and all members are invited to attend, to assist in the Sale, to sell plants, to enjoy the camaraderie and visit other groups.

Our participation will begin around 3:00 Friday afternoon, Oct. 10, raising tents, setting up tables, arranging plants and posters, till about 6:00 p.m.

On Saturday, Oct. 11, the Gardens will be open from 7:00 to 9:00 a.m. for our final preparations.

The front gate will close at 8:30 a.m. on Saturday & Sunday, and participants will enter by the side south gate after the front gate closes, on foot, until 9:00. The public will be admitted at 10 a.m. on both days. Admission is \$4.00.

From 7:00 to 9:00 a.m. on Saturday & Sunday, traffic will be one way, in the front gate & out the side gate. The Festival will end at 4:00 p.m. on Saturday & 3:00 p.m. on Sunday. Only after 4:15 on Saturday & 3:40 on Sunday, will we be allowed to bring vehicles in to re-supply or remove plants.

Parking for participants not bringing plants or supplies is across the street from the front entrance to the Gardens in the south parking lot.

The USF Botanical Gardens takes 10% of our gross sales; the remaining 90% will be split 70/20% between the participant & the RFCI, so mark your plants accordingly, remembering that you get 70% of the selling price.

We have provided ID cards for RFCI workers. Only those with ID cards will be admitted before the Sale begins. If you are refused admittance, someone from our group will vouch for you to gain admittance. Wear your RFCI T-shirt.

### DIRECTIONS TO USF PLANT FESTIVAL

Enter the Gardens from Bruce B Downs one block north of Fowler, turn East on Pine St. & Left at Alumni Drive. Go one block to the Gardens entrance on the left. We will be in the southeast corner of the Gardens.

**IMPORTANT:** Members bringing plants to sell need to restrict sales to fruiting plants only – no ornamentals or flowers.

## Notes from the President.

We hosted four other fruit groups on September 14<sup>th</sup> and the room was packed. Chris Rollins of Fruit & Spice Park gave an informative overview of fruit cultivated at the park. Not only did we learn about exotic fruit grown at the park, but we got a chance to taste some like "Abiu", Jakarta Mango, Jack Fruit, it was a treat for all.

I want to thank those people who helped bring the visitors a memorable visit. Jerry & Cora Coronel for receiving and giving a tour of their garden and to those members who helped with the tour.

A special thanks to Shige and Ron for their spectacular food presentation and to many others who filled our tasting table with a large variety of delicious dishes, giving our visitors a taste of what our club members can do.

Thanks to Paul Braneski for bringing in the Rambutans and Jimmy Lee for preparing a wok full of stir fry for us.



Reminder that on October 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> we will be having our Fall Plant sale at USF and we will be needing volunteers to help us answering questions, and handling other small chores for the customers. The money that we earn at the plant sale help us to defray expenses for field trips, so please help.

Thank you for your participation.

## WHAT'S HAPPENING

Sep-Oct 2008

By PAUL ZMODA

A most fantastic event happened to me recently – a once-in-a-lifetime occurrence which seemed too surreal to be real. I was doing yard work when a thunderstorm brewed up quickly. The downpour had me seeking shelter under our carport to wait it out. The sun came out brightly and I watched the raindrops falling like sparkling diamonds. Then a rainbow appeared to the east. I've seen them before but this one was unusual in that the left side ended about 100 feet away, just next to our street. I actually saw the end of the rainbow! I called Luisa to witness this and remarked that there is where the fabled "pot of gold" lies. Yeah, yeah, sure, sure.

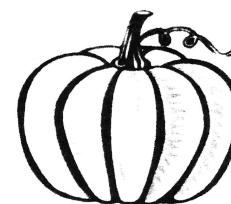
When the rain stopped, I was compelled to go to the place where the prismatic colors indicated that I should look. Right on the exact spot was a Walmart gift card, folded and dirty! When I called to inquire, I found that it had a BALANCE STILL REMAINING on it!!

The recorded voice said it held a value of "zero dollars and 56 cents". No pot of gold to be sure, but free cash nonetheless. Maybe those leprechauns are being affected by our current economy or are just getting cheaper – I don't know. At any rate, I was totally excited to prove that the tale has some truth to it after all: so freaky!

Our Kwai muk fruits have been ripening and I got to taste some. They are soft and quite juicy, yellow outside and pink inside and hold seeds the size and shape of chickpeas. My initial gustatory experience was a pleasant one. The fruits' pulp was very refreshing, having a flavor which seemed to be that of ripe strawberries soaked in orange juice with a hint of cantaloupe melon.

This was my payoff for a 7 year wait from a seed. What a nice treat. This experience and others is what keeps me raising rare fruits. My taste buds eagerly await the next challenge.

New plantings: peppers, tomatoes, grape vine. Also many seeds of carrots, cucumbers, lettuces, herbs, radishes, chards, raab and lots and lots of Oriental greens.

**Programs/Events:****October 11-12:** USF Botanical Garden Fall Plant Festival**November 9:** Cold Protection**December 14:** Holiday Celebration**TASTING TABLE****September 2008**

Cimafranca	Green beans almonidine	Schaefer	Brownies
Walker	Sesame pasta chicken salad	Lee	Stirfry, scones
Engelbrecht	Fried rice w/vegetables, Turkey	Johnston	Tomato salad
Branesky	Java plums, noni fruit, ohida gooseberries	M. Branesky	Puto steamed rice
Beeker	Chocolate cake	Hendry	Dried persimmons
Tanaka	Inari Zushi	Campani	Brownies
Palis	Greek pasta salad w/chicken	Gibson	Key Lime bars
Premraj	Banana roll	Dickey	Flan, ham
S. Jones	Black beans & rice	Goings	Breadsticks
T. Worsham	Potato salad	S. Worsham	Baked beans
R. Jones	(Manatee RFCI) dried jujube	Andrews	Baked chicken (2)
McAveety	Guacamole, Limeade	Whitfield	Cuke salad
Kerns	Potato salad, Chocolate cake	Hunts	Muffins
B. Miller	Chinese crackers	C. Miller	Rigatoni salad
Topping	Pound cake	Tamura	Deviled eggs
P. Robertson	(Manatee RFCI) Key lime muffins	Ferreira	Potato salad
Sawada	Sushi fruit plates, Watermelon Swan carving		
Shigemura	Cranberry yokan, Turkey w/grains, fruit & nuts, Orange cakes, Strawberry cakes		
Novak	Ham, Wild rice w/ham & pineapple, Key lime cookies, Guava-banana nut bread, Meiwa kumquats		

And many more delicious dishes not listed on the sign up sheet. Thanks to everyone for the generous donations to the Tasting Table. *Fabulous* as always!!!

**New Members:** Angel & Miko Hernandez Tampa Millie Beeker Riverview  
Michelle Doll Tampa

**Members' Corner:** **Free for the digging - Lady Palms.** Must bring your own shovels & plastic bags. Call Marilyn Chavez for directions (813) 932-9077.

**STICKY RICE WITH GAC (*Momordica cochinchinensis*)**

- 1 ripe gac fruit
- 2 cups of sticky rice (glutinous rice)
- 2 Tbs brown sugar
- 2 Tbs cooking wine

Soak the rice overnight in water. The following day, drain rice. Cut the gac, remove red & yellow pulp into bowl. Add cooking wine and whisk the pulp until the seeds emerge from the pulp. Mix rice with the pulp mixture thoroughly, then put in a steamer. Steam rice until cooked. Add brown sugar and mix. The hot rice should melt the sugar quickly. The rice may be put into a mold to set and cool before serving.

This type of rice is used for festivities. It's quite a treat with a nutty flavor. The unique thing about this is that it doesn't dry out if left out.

## RARE FRUIT @ THE FRUIT & SPICE PARK by CHRIS ROLLINS

Chris began his talk by congratulating us on having this meeting of the Rare Fruit Councils in central Florida. He said there were a lot of benefits of groups meeting together & hopes this will continue and prosper, and suggested that if all the clubs in Florida got together, we could afford to publish a magazine similar to what the California groups publish. The magazine could be in color with photos and articles contributed by all the clubs in Florida and could be very beneficial.

The Fruit & Spice Park is 37 acres and most of the fruit we had on the tables to taste at the meeting was brought by Chris. They are in the process at the Park of digging a 2½ acre lake with over 2000 cubic feet of soil and rock coming out. This should add to the beautiful landscaping and upgrade the landscaping. Chris invited all of us to come down and see the Park and recommended June & July as the best time, the mango and lychee season. Come down to Miami or go online at [Fruit&SpicePark.com](http://Fruit&SpicePark.com).

On Aug 22, 1992 Chris decided to redesign the whole park because he came in the morning after the hurricane and the Park was gone. Most of the trees were laying sideways and all that was left were holes in the ground. Some of the trees he hadn't even seen before. At that point they took out a giant sheet of paper and a pencil and started redrawing. Now the Park has a more orderly landscaping, the trees planted where they come from and in the families they're in, rather than the haphazard way they were planted before.

At this point Christ turned on the slide projector to show us some of the fruit that are growing in the Fruit & Spice Park.

The Mango. Chris said in his list of the top 10 most popular fruit, 1 through 10 is the mango. There are about 150 different named varieties, every size from 6 ounces to 5 pounds and in all colors. There are a large number of the best

growing in the Park. He said we all know mangos and he doesn't need to tell us about them.

Akee. Fruit with a really strong ethnic local attachment. Akee is the national fruit of Jamaica. In the 1900s over 5000 Jamaicans died from this, their national dish, according to the University of Miami. It's the blowfish of tropical fruit, perfectly safe if you pay attention. But only one part is edible, the aril around the seed, and the seed itself is poison.

Soursop, a member of the Anona family. They are sometimes found in the grocery stores, they have a deliciously sweet flavor, but they haven't gone main street in the United States as yet; but one day they will. Like all Anonas, each segment has a seed and the seeds are poison if they're chewed up but if they're swallowed whole, they just go right on through the system without damage.

Sugar apple, first cousin to the soursop, and everybody loves sugar apples. You can grow them from the seed and in 2 or 3 years you'll have fruit. It's that simple. They come in 2 colors, red & green, and that's the only difference.

Jackfruit. It looks like a watermelon wrapped in alligator skin, a fruit that Chris loves and is highly recommended by him. It is a brother to the breadfruit and tastes like a banana and cantaloupe mixed together. But the jackfruit has latex and it sometimes can be really challenging, so before you open a jackfruit, get vegetable oil and rub it all over your hands. Otherwise the latex gets on your hands, your fingers stick together, it gets under your fingernails and you can't get it out; it's just not fun. Like the akee, what you eat in the jackfruit is the aril around each seed, but unlike the akee, the seeds are not poison and can be roasted and eaten like chestnuts.

Strawberry fruit or muntingia. It is called strawberry fruit because the flower looks like a strawberry flower. It tastes like cotton candy and you can grow an 18" tree in a 1 gallon pot and in 6 months you may get fruit.

Carambola or star fruit. Everybody knows the carambola and it's been available in Florida for



over 100 years. But it wasn't until 1973 when the Miami Rare Fruit Council financed a USDA trip to Malaysia to get carambola seed. But the one they brought back would just take the enamel right off your teeth. They were so sour that people used them to polish brassware and get the tarnish off the brass. Then they brought back a grafted tree from Thailand called the fwang tung. They also brought a big stack of sweet carambola seeds.

Governors plum. Really good for jelly but it tends to be invasive and is on some areas' hit lists. It makes a very pleasant plum sauce but it's not a fruit that has widespread endorsement; only a few people fall in love with the governors plum. It also makes a very pleasant juice but it's the kind of plant that you need to think about: do you really want it in your yard? If you enjoy looking at it, that's really enough, but if you don't make jelly & juice, you might think, what do I want with that? I don't really enjoy it.

Kei apple. Comes in a purple form & yellow form, both of which are very pleasant little fruit, but a little on the tart side. Kei apple bushes have thorns and are notorious for producing impassable areas. The fruit is pleasant eaten out of hand and makes an excellent jam.

Cashew. A really interesting fruit, but the cashew nut is surrounded by a very caustic acid liquid within the shell. Raw cashew nuts will make blisters in your mouth. The nut has to be heated to drive off the liquid to make the nut edible. The cashew nut is the fruit and the cashew apple, which looks like a fruit, is in fact the stem which is swelled out in growing and is eaten like a fruit.

Dragon fruit, a very popular plant all over the world, Vietnam to Florida. Beautiful flowers and fruit. Everybody loved them but the fruit tasted remarkably like dry water, almost no flavor. The fruit are red and red is a prestigious color. They sell because they are red and have beautiful flowers.

Jaboticaba. We all love the jaboticaba. It comes from southern Brazil and there are several different varieties we don't have here. We're getting more and more Brazilian friends and we'll

see more varieties in the future. The tree is a beautiful one, small to 10" tall at maturity, and compact. It can fruit as many as 5 times a year if it gets plenty of water and fertilizer. The fruit has a thick skin like a muscadine which it resembles, and tastes like a Concord grape. Unfortunately we can't buy jaboticaba juice & jelly here as they do in Brazil. The trees are usually grown from seed because they are very hard to propagate otherwise. It is one you would want as a specimen tree.

Malay apple. Crunchy like a cucumber and sweet. It is cold tender and originally Chris didn't think they could grow it at the Park but the tree is perfectly happy and growing well.

Cherry of the Rio Grande. There are lots of little berries in the world and it's up to you to decide which ones you want to eat. This is one that Chris recommends. It tastes very much like a sweet cherry. Unfortunately at the Park every little ripe fruit has at least one worm in it, but they don't dwell on it. They pass out the fruit and people eat them and enjoy them. They're like Surinam cherries; every fruit has a worm in it.

Pitomba, also from Brazil, it's a pretty tree or bush when it's small and produces a small fruit, yellow when ripe. Chris describes the tree as the monster, the Godzilla of fruit trees. It just gets too big for peoples' yards and Chris doesn't endorse it. The tree's shade is so dense that nothing grows under it and the fruit ripens, falls on the ground, rots and stinks.

Monstera deliciosa, a delicious monster, an edible philodendron, related to the elephant ear. Try to eat the fruit before it's ripe and it will burn your mouth, a chemical burn from oxalic acid or calcium oxalate crystals. But when it's ripe, it tastes like a fruit made with pineapple & banana. It is excellent. It's a long slender fruit like the banana and ripens about 1" a day so it's eaten over several days as it ripens.

Mamey sapote. This is the number one favorite fruit in Cuba, and Miami has more Cubans than Havana. Years ago when Chris was a young boy, there were very few mamey sapote trees in south

Florida and the fruit sold for 8 & 9 dollars a pound and seeds were in demand. The pulp when it's ripe tastes like a sweet potato pudding and very often you can go to the supermarket and get mamay sapote ice cream, since we have a large Cuban population in this area. It is an excellent fruit eaten out of hand but unfortunately it takes 18 to 20 months from flower to ripe fruit, which means the fruit must go through the winter and maybe a killing freeze.

**Black sapote.** All sapotes are from tropical America and all sapotes are sweet and soft when they're ripe. There are 7 different kinds of fruit called sapotes and they are not related to each other. The black sapote is related to the persimmon and is sometimes called the chocolate pudding fruit. It doesn't taste like chocolate pudding but the pulp when ripe looks like

chocolate pudding. It is delicious right out of hand but also makes a delicious ice cream. It's a large orange size fruit with sweet creamy pulp and 2 or 3 large seeds, and reasonably cold hardy.

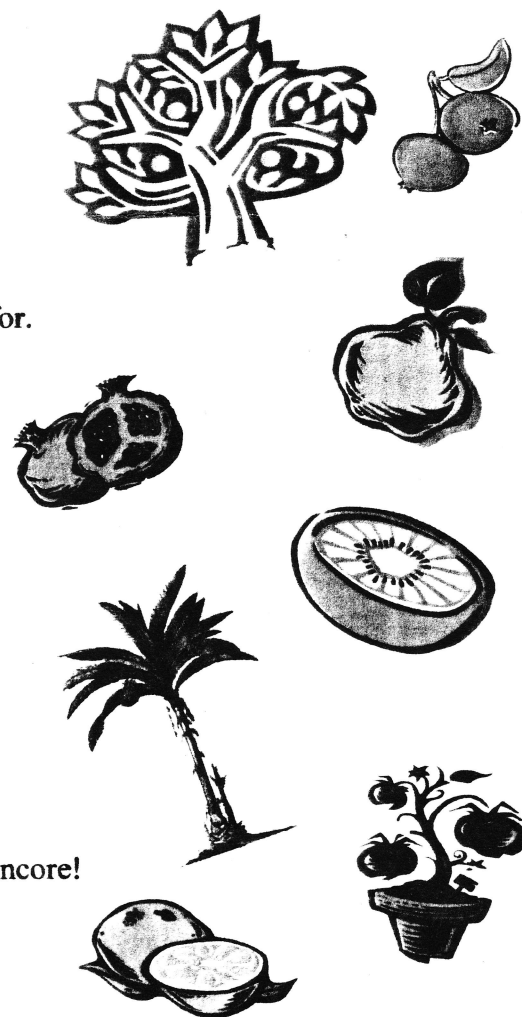
**Sapodilla,** which in some part of tropical America, is also called sapote. The flesh of the sapodilla is like a strip of soft candy. The fruit is the size of an orange. It starts out brown and stays brown even as it ripens. Cut it in half, scoop out the pulp and enjoy it and discard the 2 or 3 seeds. The sapodilla tree sap is where chewing gum originally came from until the 1960s. The cooked sap of the sapodilla with sweetener and flavoring added was the original chewing gum so popular in the Americas and taken abroad to other countries by Americans in World War II. But sapodilla sap is no longer used for making chewing gum in the United States.

\* \* \* \* \*

### THE RAVING by EDGAR APPLE POME

Once upon a weekend sunny, trees were brought to sell for money  
By the members and suppliers who could get them through the gate.  
Presently there came a spectre, said he was the Plant Inspector  
Here to check the many plants collected on this hectic date  
Only this and nothing more; citrus canker, nevermore!  
Ah, distinctly we remember, it was the month before November.  
We hope that each and every member helps with what we're working for.  
Gradually a large crowd gathered.  
All the plants were clean and lathered.\*  
Then the crowd began to holler,  
"Come on, let us in the gate! We want in! We cannot wait!"  
"Only this and nothing more."  
Through the gate the crowd came sweeping,  
Running, jumping, even leaping,  
For a fond and loving effort to buy the plant they did adore.  
Only this and nothing more.  
In the intervening hours, plants were bought with fruits and flowers.  
Fruit was tasted, questions answered, and from the experts, even more.  
When the crowd at last departed, none of us were broken hearted,  
Even though the trees remaining seemed as many as before.  
It was fun we must agree.  
We'll breathe a sigh before we flee, "My aching back"; next spring – encore!  
Citrus canker, nevermore!

\* Don't complain, it rhymes, doesn't it?



Go green. . .make a compost pile

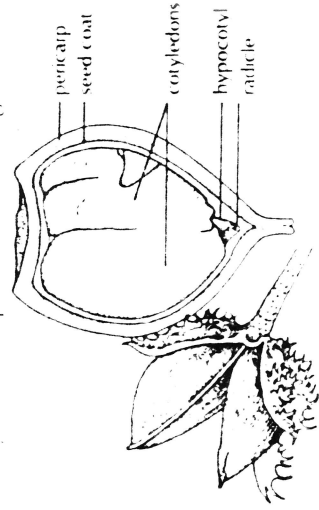
The successful propagation of plants from seeds is a highly improbable process considering the vast number of seeds produced by the parent plant and the relatively small number of plants that survive to maturity under natural circumstances. The gardener, therefore, must recognize all the possible limitations to success, and attempt to reduce or eliminate these and so produce an acceptable crop.

Nevertheless, for the gardener, the technique of propagating plants from seed is a very worthwhile and satisfying exercise as it can be a prolific method of plant production. It is also gratifying to collect the bewildering variety of seeds in the garden without causing injury to the plants—an inevitable consequence of vegetative propagation.

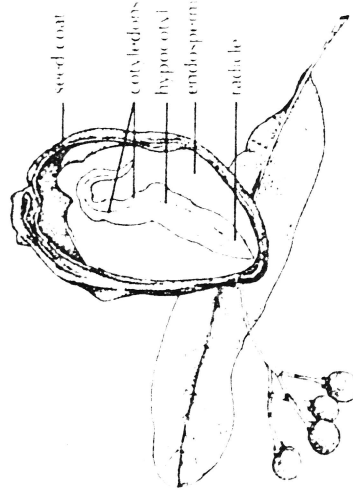
A seed is produced from the fertilization of the female part of a flower by pollen from the male section. Seed is the end product of the sexual process and as such produces a population of plants that exhibit variable characteristics. By a controlled breeding program, it is possible to eliminate the greater proportion of this variation and produce a population of seedlings that to all intents and purposes are similar. This is the usual practice in the production of bedding plants, vegetables and flower crops—that is those plants with a short enough life cycle to allow an intensive breeding program. Woody plant seedlings are more variable because of their longer life cycle and their tendency to cross-pollinate in their natural habitat.

Seeds are a resting and survival stage in the continuance of a plant's existence. Basically a seed consists of an embryo, which is the young plant at its most immature and in its simplest components; a food supply, which maintains the embryo throughout the resting period and provides the basis for further development when germination gets under way; and a seed coat, which acts as the protective component. The embryo consists of the young root system, or radicle; the young stem system, or plumule, which carries the seed leaves, or cotyledons (which may be adapted for food storage); and the hypocotyl, which is the junction between the root and shoot system. Examples of different

embryos are given below: one has the food stored in the endosperm; the other has the cotyledons adapted for food storage.



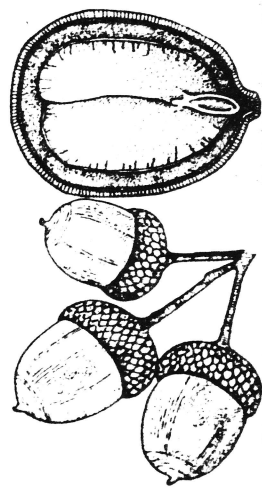
Beech *Fagus sylvatica* × 2.5



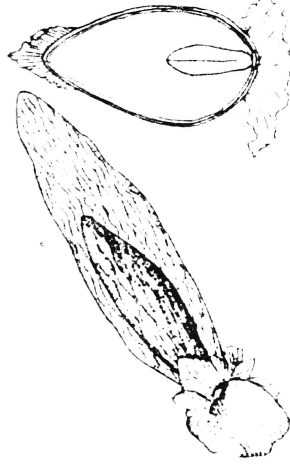
Time *Tilia platyphyllos* × 9

There are a number of distinctions that can be made within seeds as a group.

The enormous variation in the size of seeds will inevitably influence the success with which they are propagated. Large seeds, such as acorns, chestnuts and hazelnuts, are produced in small numbers, germinate satis-



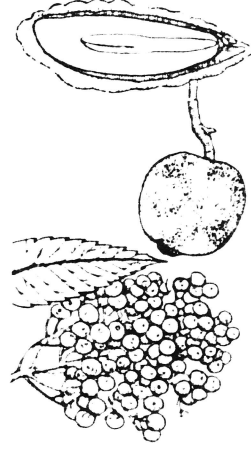
Oak *Quercus rubra* × 1



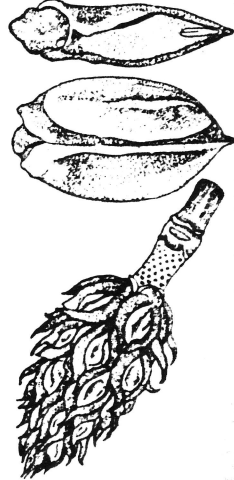
*Rhododendron maximum* × 24

factorily, and as a general rule establish well. Dustlike seeds, such as those from rhododendrons and lobelia, have a low germination and survival rate.

Seeds also vary greatly in the materials that they use as food reserves—that is the stored food in the seed. Those plants that store food as carbohydrates, such as elderberries, marigolds and laburnum, are generally stable and long-lived, and will withstand drying. Seeds that store food as fats or oils, for example peony, magnolia and chestnut seeds, deteriorate both with time and drying and so present problems of storage and survival. It is better to allow these seeds to mature on the plant and collect them just before dispersal.



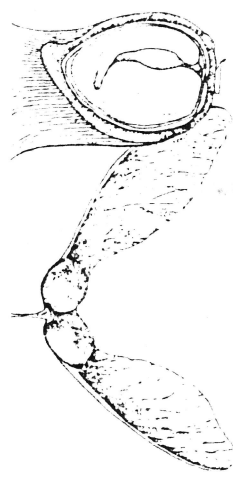
Elderberry *Sambucus nigra* × 10



*Magnolia grandiflora* × 2

Survival of drying, however, is not just a function of the stored food; it also reflects the condition of the seed coat and its ability to protect the seed. Plants, such as willows with very poorly developed seed coats survive for only very short periods, while those plants, such as sweet peas, laburnum and lupine, with very hard, impermeable seed coats usually survive for considerable periods in a wide variety of conditions. The seeds of the Indian lotus (*Nelumbo nucifera*) are reputed to have retained viability in a peat bog for over one thousand years.

The variation in characteristics of the seed and more often the fruit, are endless; some seeds and fruits have large wings, hooks or other projections that provide an aid to dispersal, and these can easily be trimmed or rubbed off. The shape of a seed is designed so that when it is dispersed, it will fall to the ground and lie in the best position for germination. Altering its shape may affect this characteristic, and so, when planting, try not to place a seed upside down. If incorrectly positioned the stem of the germinating seed may produce a kink.



Maple *Acer platanoides* × 3

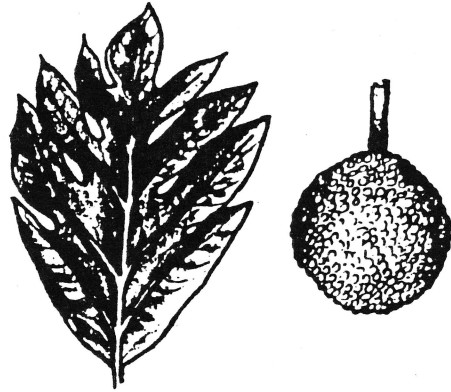
## Commercial seeds

As well as being sold loose in packets, seeds are now available commercially in other forms that make sowing easier and more accurate. Pelleted seeds are coated with decomposable material which disintegrates when in contact with moisture. It is especially convenient to buy small seeds in this form as they are much easier to handle and sow. Seeds can also be purchased evenly spaced on a tape of decomposable paper or plastic. Just cut the tape to the required length and place it in a furrow  $\frac{1}{2}$  in deep and then cover with soil.

129. *Syzygium malaccense* - Malay apple

Evergreen tree to 40 feet, native to Southeast Asia. Leaves are glossy, dark green, leathery and up to 12 inches long. Flowers are produced on old wood and are purplish in color. Pear-shaped fruit is about 2 inches long and ranges in color from pink to purple. Its white pulp is eaten fresh, stewed or preserved. Plants are started from seed or cuttings.

## FAMILY PANDANACEAE

144. *Pandanus odoratissimus* - Bread-fruit

Small evergreen tree to 20 feet, native to Southeast Asia and the Philippine Islands. Leaves to 5 feet in length with sharp spines on margins. Prop roots present around trunk. Flowers are white. Its round, cannonball-sized fruit resembles a pineapple. The inner fleshy end of each cell - a separate fruit - is sweet and starchy. Seeds at the woody end are also edible. Terminal buds and tender white base of leaves are eaten raw or boiled. Propagation is by seed or suckers.



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