



RFCI

NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2009

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: MARCH 8

PROGRAM: OUR SPEAKER FOR THE MARCH MEETING WILL BE TOM SPREEN, who is a professor at the University of S. Florida and an authority on citrus diseases. He will be speaking about that citrus disease that has all citrus growing people in Florida worried, namely "citrus greening". His talk should give our members the latest information on this potential danger to our trees. Come to the meeting, get this information, and enjoy our fabulous banquet table, great plant raffle, farmers market & interesting camaraderie.

WHAT'S HAPPENING

Feb-Mar 2009

By PAUL ZMODA

As I write this on February 4, the outdoor temperature is 35 deg. F and dropping. Is this really Florida? Whatever happened to global warming?

For me, this third round of subfreezing weather may sound the death knell for many of my plants. AThe week before, we saw lows of close to 22 deg. F. Plenty bad. Large specimens, such as limes, jackfruit, guavas, white sapotes and even star fruit never looked so stricken; if they live, it might take years to become what they once were.

One interesting note: although all bananas were reduced to brown leathery foliage – one plant definitely held a single, tender, green leaf – untouched by the cold. How could this be? (It was later scorched by the following freeze, however.)

Our large bignay, tamarind and kwai muk are sitting there in all shades of drying browns and there is more killing cold coming.

I fear all of you readers will have some heartbreaking setbacks, but we never give up, do we? Of course not, for we have something to prove, and patience is key.

One recent event has my attitude changing: we have bluebirds nesting in our bird houses, 10 years and finally occupied by these brilliantly colored songsters. They are so fearless of humans and a delight to watch as they capture cutworms in the vegetable gardens and drive away woodpeckers that have grown accustomed to sleeping in the vacant nest boxes. Watching all the birds around us makes me happy despite all the plants dying around us.

New plantings: Fennel, broccoli, lettuce & tomato seeds (indoors, of course).

Scheduled Programs/Speakers/Events:

March 8: Speaker: Tom Spreen Subject: Citrus Greening
April 11 – 12: USF Botanical Garden Spring Plant Festival

Citrus Celebration 2009: Our 8th Citrus Celebration at the Florida State Fair was very successful. The weather was perfect so it was a very busy day at the fair. We were very busy cutting the citrus (about 60 varieties) into sample size servings and squeezing orange juice. Approximately 750 bowls of fruit and 400 cups of juice were enjoyed by the public. A huge **"THANKS"** to everyone who helped make the Citrus Celebration a success (donating fruit, picking and washing fruit, delivering the fruit to the fairgrounds and helping with the event on Sunday). We received many favorable comments from the public.

Florida State Fair Exhibit: Our exhibit received Sixth place in the Plant Society competition. Each society receives a set-up premium of \$250. Sixth place receives an additional \$50 and the green rosette ribbon. **THANKS** to Roberta and Steve Harris, Thom Scott, Bill Vega, Paul Branesky, Charles and Linda Novak for setting up the exhibit and to all the members who who manned the exhibit. A special **"thanks"** to member Jene VanButzel (Jene's Tropical Nursery in St. Petersburg) for supplying most of the fruit trees. The public is always interested in our display of fruit trees and the unusual fruits we exhibit.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTION

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

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

Fred Engelbrecht	Thom Scott	Verna Dickey
Bob Heath	Judith Cimafranca	Susan McAveety
Jimmy Lee	Sally Lee	Andrew Hendrickson
Jerry Amyot	Teri Worsham	Paul Branesky
Mark Foltarz	Charles Novak	Linda Novak

New Members:	Elsa & Doug Richards	Tampa	Sabah Dickson	Tampa
	Agnes Strack	Tampa	Teresita Hardin	Tampa

CLUB COOKBOOK: The club is planning to publish a Rare and Tropical Fruit Cookbook. We are asking members to contribute their favorite recipes. Your name will be published along with your recipes using rare and tropical fruit. Please give your recipes to Verna Dickey, Sally Lee or Linda Novak. Recipes can also be mailed to Verna Dickey, 2114 Fairfield Ave., Brandon, FL 33510, or e-mailed to: Tampa.Bay.RFCI@gmail.com.

NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT

February is State Fair time and Sunday, February 8, was the eighth year of our club's participation in the Citrus Celebration and display at the fair. Attendees of the fair enjoyed a dish of the variety of fruit cut into sections for tasting, and fresh juice in cups. The turnout was great and the line of people selecting bites of citrus was endless. We shut down at 4:00 to clean up.

Thanks to all members who participated to make this affair another great success. Special thanks goes to Charles & Linda Novak for offering their yard as a place to wash the fruit, and for bringing fruit trees from Jene's for the display. Also, special thanks goes to Roberta & Steve Harris for setting up the display, which was beautiful, and to Paul Branesky, Vega & Thom Scott, who did more than their share setting up and later dismantling the display. Work was well done by all who participated.

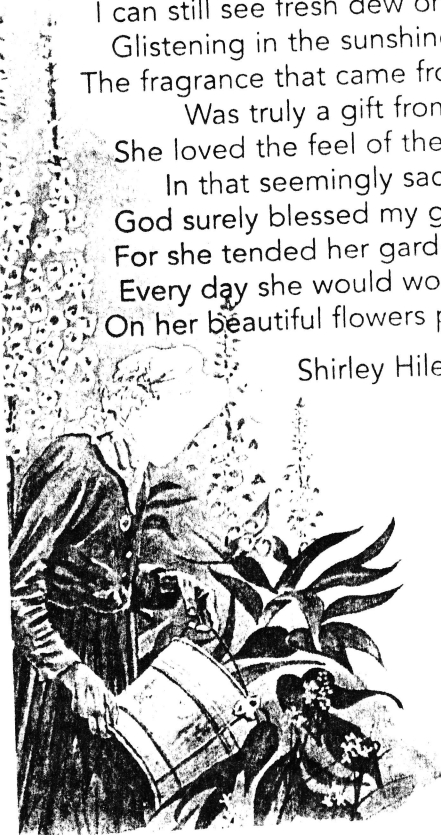
Procedures and rules for the plant sale at USF in April are being reviewed by the Board, so if you have suggestions or new ideas concerning this affair, please submit them.

Please note that we will elect Board members at the next meeting, March 8. If you wish to participate or join the Board, please attend.

Grandmother's Flower Garden

Memories of grandmother's flower garden
Are made up of lilies fair,
In neat rows beside the marigolds
And the sunflowers she planted there.
Her roses were always so beautiful –
Bouquets graced her table each day.
I can still see fresh dew on their petals,
Glistening in the sunshine's soft rays.
The fragrance that came from her flowers
Was truly a gift from God.
She loved the feel of the warm earth
In that seemingly sacred sod.
God surely blessed my grandmother,
For she tended her garden with care.
Every day she would work her magic
On her beautiful flowers planted there.

Shirley Hile Powell



Renewal

Unseen, unheard, in wintry sleep
The seedling waits its fate to meet,
When morning sun and April rain
Awaken growth and once again
With silent dignity and grace
Each leaf and bud reveals its face,
As stems spring forth from greening sod,
Embracing life, nurtured by God.

Vi B. Chevalier

As a Result of a Powerful Antioxidant
in a Rare Red Fruit Called Goji
My Family is Experiencing



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The Value of Organic Matter

by Lewis Maxwell

Organic matter is the most important material we can add to the sandy soils common in Florida. A good soil in the mid section of our country can contain more than 5% organic matter while our sandy soils often have less than 1% organic matter.

Organic matter or humus in our soils has a tendency to bind loose sandy soils while it will make stiff clay soils more open and porous. Organic matter increases the water holding capacity of sands. It also makes the soil into a more favorable environment for the growth of plant roots and for the growth of beneficial soil microorganisms. It often supplies certain catalytic agents and growth substances beneficial for plant growth.

Decomposing organic matter renders inorganic elements from our fertilizers more readily available to plants and thus increases soil fertility and the availability of essential elements such as iron, zinc, manganese and others.

Organic matter and clay greatly improve the buffering ability of the soil and thus makes it less likely to damage our plants by the excessive use of artificial fertilizers or by the inadvertent addition of some toxic material to the soil.

On an equal weight basis, humus far exceeds clay in its ability to combine and hold exchangeable bases. Since organic colloids are extremely active, an increase of 1% of organic matter can double the exchange capacity of a soil. The base exchange capacity of a soil is the ability of a soil to absorb and retain a group of elements such as calcium, magnesium, potassium, copper and zinc. These are known as exchangeable bases.

Organic matter decomposes rapidly and completely in Florida soils. Therefore, we must continually add organic matter to our soils.

Another value of organic matter is that vegetables, flowers, fruit, and landscape plants growing in soils that are high in organic matter or that are covered with a heavy permanent mulch are less damaged by nematodes than are those growing in soils of low organic content.

Organic matter in the soil seems to contribute to the reduction of nematodes in several ways. Decomposing organic matter causes a great increase of soil microbes, fungi, bacteria, and actinomycetes. These are followed by a great number of organisms that feed upon them, including many predatory nematodes, mites, insects and fungi that capture and feed upon parasitic nematodes.

Also the decomposition of some organic materials and green manures have been shown to generate other chemicals that are directly toxic to nematodes and thus decrease their numbers.

Bedding plants

The sowing of bedding plant seeds is a relatively simple procedure and can be guaranteed, within reason, to produce a reliable and uniform crop of seedlings.

The main stumbling block that the gardener will experience is knowing when to sow particular plants. The object is to produce, at the same time, all bedding plants

at the requisite size for planting out so that they will make a significant impact when in flower.

The sequence of bedding plant sowing is governed primarily by the speed of germination and subsequently by the growth rate of the seedlings of each species. Thus slow-developing plants are sown early in the year

—although it is important to remember that in the very early part of the year light intensity is usually poor and growth rates of seedlings will be proportionately depressed.

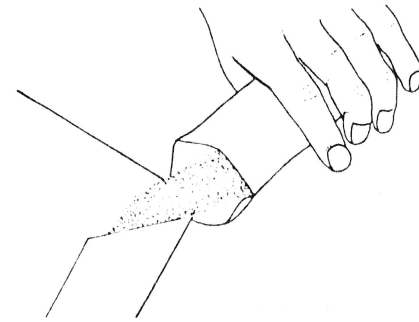
Sow bedding plant seeds in a pan (dwarf pot) or a seed tray depending on the quantity of seed used. Because the seeds germinate relatively rapidly at warm temperatures, peat-based composts are quite satisfactory, and there are many proprietary brands available.

Fill the container with compost, but keep it light and uncompacted so that drainage is maintained. The main problem with peat-based composts is that they tend to waterlog easily, causing both death of the seeds and poor seedling development—symptoms often associated with damping-off diseases and sciarid fly attacks.

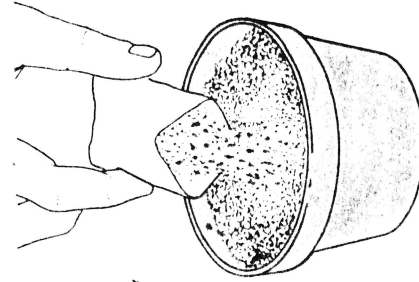
Many bedding plants, for example lobelia and *Begonia semperflorens*, have incredibly small, almost dustlike, seeds that are difficult to sow evenly and at a sufficiently low density. These should be thoroughly mixed with some dry, fine sand, so that an even distribution can be achieved. Covering with compost is not then necessary.

With the seed packet close to the container sprinkle the seeds evenly over the compost. Sow thinly to avoid having overcrowded seedlings later on. Sift just sufficient com-

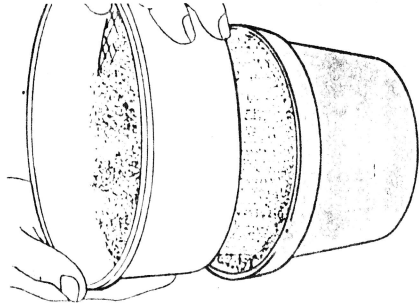
Sowing bedding plant seeds



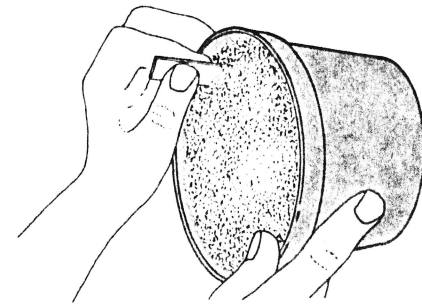
4 Mix small dustlike seeds with some dry, fine sand to extend the seeds.



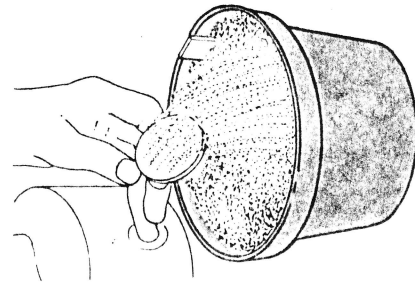
5 Broadcast sow the seeds thinly, keeping hand close to compost surface.



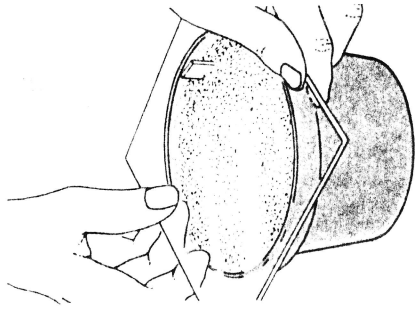
6 Sift just enough compost over the seeds to make an even cover.



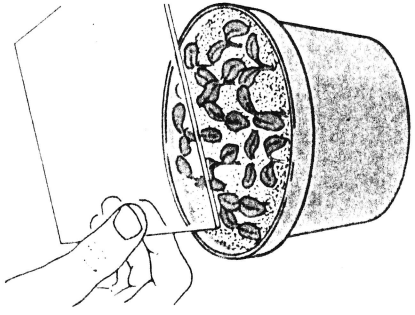
7 Label the container with name of plant and date of sowing



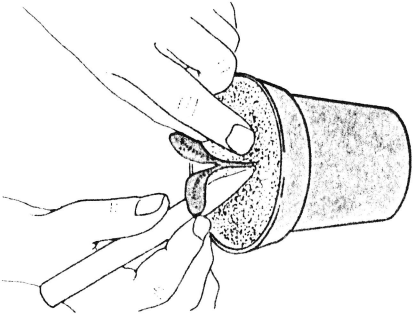
8 Water in a fungicide to prevent damping-off diseases



9 Cover container with a pane of glass. Stand in the warm (21°C/70°F).



10 Remove glass as soon as seedlings appear. Place container in well-lit area.



11 Prick out seedlings into individual pots once they are large enough to handle.

post over the seeds to make an even cover. Label the container and water the seeds either by using a fine rose on a watering can or by standing the container in a basin of water. Add a fungicide such as Captan to the water. Cover with a sheet of glass to conserve moisture and place in a warm environment (21°C/70°F) to promote germination; at this stage light is not important.

As soon as the seedlings emerge, place them in the light to encourage growth and remove the cover because excessive humidity among seedlings at this stage will lead to damping off.

The temperature, however, should still be maintained at as warm a level as possible to encourage quick growth to a size at which the seedlings can be pricked out.

As soon as the seedlings are large enough to handle, prick them out into individual pots or seed trays. Their growth will inevitably be checked when they are transplanted, but the smaller and less branched the root system is the less damage and therefore check will be experienced.

The main problem will be the likelihood of damping-off diseases. This can only be avoided by scrupulous hygiene, light sowing densities and regular sprays with fungicide such as Captan or copper-based chemicals.

SEQUENCE OF SOWING

January to February
Antirrhinum;

Begonia semperflorens

February to March

Dahlia; *Petunia*;

Salpiglossis; *Salvia*

March

Ageratum; *Alyssum*;

Lobelia;

Mesembryanthemum;

Nemesia; *Scabiosa*;

Tagetes—African

March to April

Callistephus; *Nicotiana*;

Portulaca;

Tagetes—French

April

Zinnia

09-19

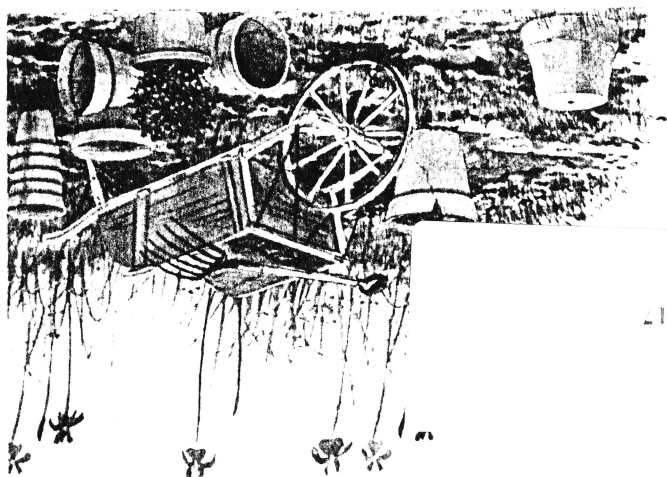
A GUIDE TO TROPICAL FRUIT TREES & VINES continued

FAMILY - PUNICACEAE155. *Punica granatum* - Pomegranate

Small deciduous tree to 20 feet, native to the Middle East. Leaves of this spiny plant are 1 to 3 inches long and are arranged opposite on the branches. Reddish-orange flowers to 1-1/2 inches across. Oval-shaped fruit is up to 4 inches in diameter and red when mature. The red pulpy "kernels" are arranged in layers, separated by white paper-thin membrane. Pulp is eaten fresh or the juice is used in preparation of drinks or syrups. Propagation is by seed, cuttings or layers.

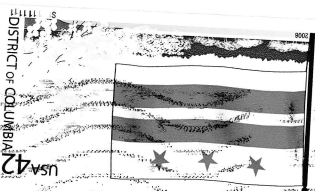
FAMILY - RHAMNACEAE156. *Zizyphus jujuba* - Chinese jujube

Deciduous tree to 25 feet, native to India. Branches have numerous spines. Light green leaves are about 3 inches in length and light green in color. Branches with drooping effect. Small whitish-green flowers produce round fruits that are orange-brown when mature and about 1 inch in diameter. White pulp is eaten fresh, dried, stewed, candied or preserved. Propagation is by seed, cuttings and grafting.



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