

April 2010



RFCI

**TAMPA BAY CHAPTER of the
RARE FRUIT COUNCIL INTERNATIONAL, INC.**

<http://www.rarefruit.org>

Meetings are held the second Sunday, 2:00 P.M.
at the Tampa Garden Club, 2629 Bayshore Blvd.

Note: There is no meeting in April.

∞ Upcoming Programs and Events ∞

April 10-11: USF Botanical Garden Spring Plant Festival

May 9: Gene Joyner of Unbelievable Acres Botanical Garden,
West Palm Beach; featuring lychees, longans and other tropical fruits
June 13: Dr. Jonathon Crane, Tropical Fruit Specialist, UF IFAS: Avocados



Calling All Volunteers!
**USF Botanical Garden Spring
Plant Festival**
April 10 and 11, 2010



Spring has sprung (finally), and it's time for the annual plant festival! We need your help. You can participate by bringing plants to donate or sell, you can help set up or you can volunteer to help with the sale. Parking is free but admission is \$5.00. The Club will reimburse workers who participate. *Please plan to join us.* Please contact Charles or Linda Novak (813-754-1399) for more information.

∞ USF Botanical Garden Spring Plant Festival ∞

The USF Spring Plant Festival is an important fundraiser. Members are invited to attend, to assist in the sale, to sell plants, to enjoy the camaraderie and to visit other exhibits.

We need volunteers to help on Friday, Saturday and on Sunday.

Setup - Friday, April 9th: Our participation will begin around 2:00 PM Friday afternoon, April 9. We need volunteers to help raise tents, set up tables, and to unload and arrange plants.

Early Morning Prep' - Saturday, April 10: The Botanical Garden will be open from 7:00 AM to 9 AM for our final preparations. Traffic will be one way — in the front gate and out the side gate.

The front gate will close at 8:30 AM on both Saturday and Sunday. After that time, volunteers may enter, on foot, by the south gate until 9:00 AM.

The gates will open to the public starting at 10:00 AM on both days.

President: Paul Branesky

Editor: Gloria Sciuto; Support: Bob & Paula Heath; Production/Distribution: Charles & Linda Novak

The Festival will close at 4:00 PM on Saturday and 3:00 PM on Sunday. After 4:15 on Saturday and after 3:40 PM on Sunday, we can bring vehicles in to re-supply or remove plants.

Vehicles cannot be left in the Botanical Garden. Parking is across the street from the front entrance.

Sales of Plants

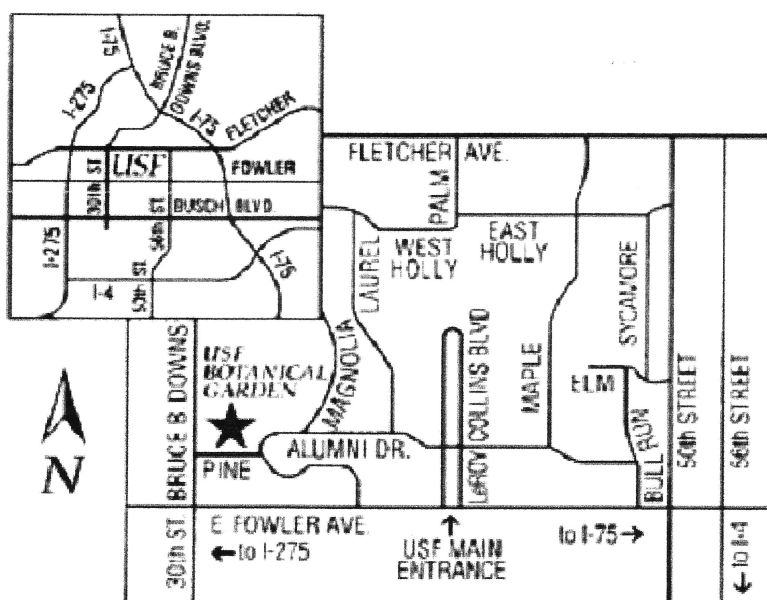
The USF Botanical Garden takes 10% of our gross sales. The participant receives 70% and 20% goes to the RFCI. Be sure to price your plants accordingly.

Note: You must restrict your sales to fruiting plants only — no ornamentals or flowers.

We have provided ID cards for RFCI workers. Only members 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. *Please wear your RFCI shirt.*

☞ Directions to the USF Botanical Garden Plant Festival ☛

This map was copied from the USF website:



Directions: The Garden is located near the southwest corner of the USF Tampa campus, at the intersection of Pine and Alumni Drive. From I-275, take Fowler Ave. east to Bruce B. Downs Blvd. and turn left. Go north one block to Pine and turn right. Go east one block to the first traffic light and turn left. Go north one block to the garden entrance on left.

☞ Editor's Note ☛

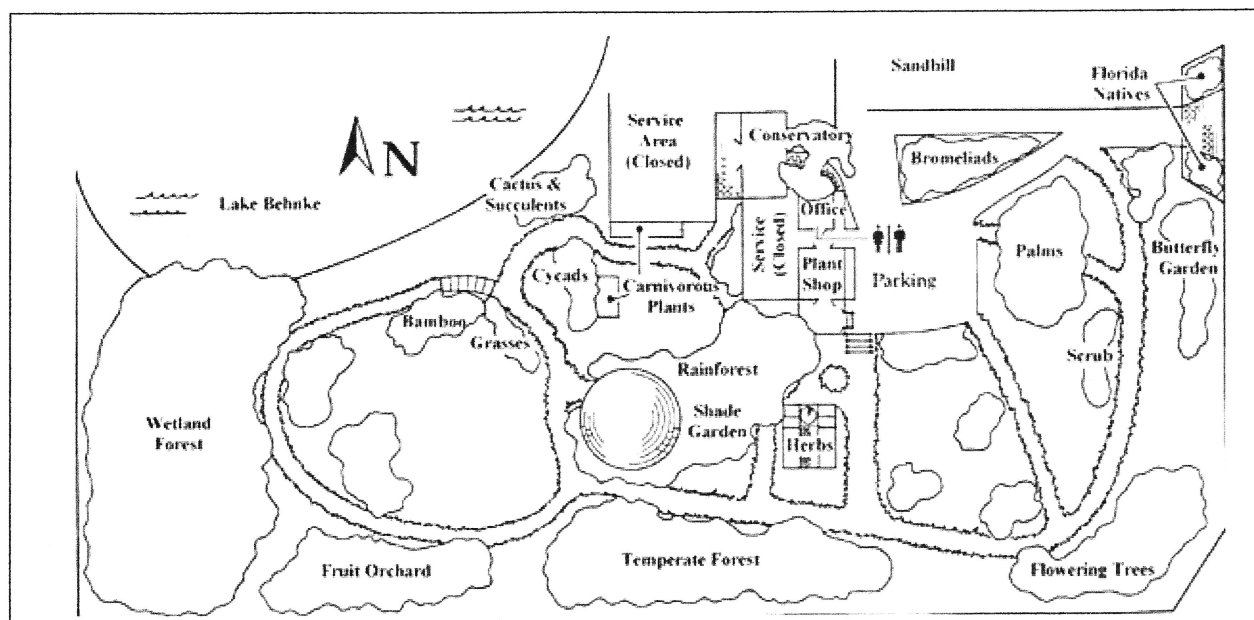
Last month, we heard Robert Messineo speak about Bee Pollination and Bee Therapy. Because of space, we could not summarize his talk in this issue.

The May 2010 issue, however, will be devoted to this important subject.

☞ USF Botanical Garden Trail Map ☛

10-27

This map was copied from the USF website:



☞ Welcome to Our Newest Members ☛

Ronalda Demmy of St. Petersburg ☼ Madeleine Reyes of Valrico ☼ Evelyn Otto of Oldsmar

☞ 2010 Board of Directors ☛

By unanimous decision of the members at large, the following Board of Directors was confirmed at our March meeting. Congratulations and Thank You to all who have come forward to serve, including:

- Paul Branesky – President
- Jimmy Lee, Charles Novak, Jerry Amyot – Vice Presidents
- Susan McAveety – Treasurer
- Linda Novak – Secretary
- Bob Heath
- Andrew Hendrickson
- Sally Lee
- Fred Engelbrecht
- Verna Dickey
- Thom Scott
- Judith Cimafranca
- Bill Vega

❧ Frigid Lessons Learned Pay Dividends This Time Around ❧

by Omar Lamelas

One summer day, while visiting my parents' house, I saw several large mangoes on the counter. I asked where they came from; my mother replied that they were from a friend's mango tree. I stood in awe of the sheer beauty and size of those mangos. It was that day that I became interested in growing my own mango trees. I asked myself, "Why have a yard filled with trees that offer nothing edible in return, when fruit-producing trees can be grown in their place?" A few days later, all non-fruit producing trees vanished from my back yard, and mulch they became! After prepping my back yard, I purchased several mango trees.

In August 2008, I became a member of the Tampa RFCI to further learn about raising tropical fruit trees. Before joining the club, I learned how to graft on my own by watching YouTube videos. I grafted five different mango buds onto one of my larger mango trees. To my surprise all the grafts that took. I felt rather proud.

Winter Protection Plan - Winter 2008

In late November 2008, I took the time to prepare for the coming winter. In the north end of Tampa where I live, temperatures tend to run 5-10 degrees colder than those reported for the Tampa area in general. I spent hundreds of dollars protecting my twelve mango trees that were now planted in the ground.

I purchased several rolls of 4-foot wire fence, large metal stakes, and over a dozen frost blankets to install over the wire cages. I even read that if you spray your plants with copper fungicide powder that this would help improve the cold resistance of the plant. As you can imagine come wintertime, mine were heavily crusted over after I sprayed several gallons on them.

Winter Protection Plan - Winter 2009

The cold snap on January 22, 2009, killed my entire mango crop, including my prized mango tree that hosted the five grafts plus several other prized tropical trees that I had in my collection. To this day, I have not been able to replace any of those plants because no one seems to have them. For quite a while, I felt extremely devastated and heartbroken.

All my efforts and preparations had been in vain, not to mention the extensive monetary loss. My first attempt to grow and maintain tropical fruit trees for a season had become a total wash. After this rather expensive lesson, I vowed not to let this happen to me again.

I was once again ready for whatever old man winter had up his sleeves, and what an extremely brutal winter season we had! This time, I decided not to plant my mango trees in the ground but to grow them in containers for portability and until I felt comfortable that I had a handle on my cold weather protection techniques.

On the south side of my house, I built a makeshift temporary greenhouse measuring 8'H x 7'W x 16'L. In this enclosure, I housed all my container-grown plants. There are also three soursop trees in the ground. I enclosed the top of my makeshift greenhouse with clear 6-mil plastic and used three 100-watt light bulbs operated by a timer as a heat source. For the walls, I used a thin bubble-wrap material.

Inside the enclosure, I added a thermometer that transmits temperature and humidity information to a monitoring station inside the house. This system has alarms that will warn you if the temperature drops

below your preset point. If the reported temperature was above 40 degrees, I only used one bulb. If it dropped between 30-40 degrees, I would use two bulbs. When it dropped below 30 degrees, I would use all three bulbs.

This year, I'm happy to report that I did not lose a single plant. As a bonus for my perseverance, several of my container-grown mango trees are now blooming for the first time!

On the west side of my house, planted in the ground, I have a Ruby x Supreme 6-29 guava tree. There are no windbreaks protecting this tree from the brutal freezing north winds. The tree measures approximately 10' in diameter and a little over 4' in height. In the summer, it provides ready to eat, bug-free, 8 oz, baseball-sized pink guavas. I did not intend to allow the winter freeze to kill or damage this highly prized gem. Around this tree, I built a circular 5'H x 12' in diameter wire corral that resembles an igloo.

I covered this structure with the same bubble-wrap plastic all the way to the ground and added a single 100-watt light bulb for freeze protection. It, too, is operated by the same timer mentioned above. This single, 100-watt light bulb kept the tree alive even when the exterior temperature dropped below 20 degrees. In this structure, I also placed several avocado, mango, sugar apple, and guava seedlings. Everything in this enclosure survived with absolutely no sign of freeze damage.

The strong winter winds did not blow over or damage the structure. The round walls offered no resistance to the wind. The heavy rains did not collapse the roof. My prized guava tree did not lose a single leaf because of the cold weather shock. In mid-February, while it was still covered, my guava started producing flower buds!

The reality that we live in an area that is semi-tropical was made very clear to me in January 2009. Since a hard freeze is imminent in this area, its wrath will kill your tropical trees and plants if you take no action to properly protect them from temperatures outside of their customary range. Spending money on plants only to have a prized fruit tree killed by a cold snap is not a financially wise decision.

A loss can also leave you feeling emotionally devastated since we tend to be attached to our prized plants. If, on the other hand, your plant does survive but it has to grow from the ground up again, it can take several years for that plant to reach production age all over again.

Protecting your mango trees from the winter freeze just isn't enough. You must continue to protect them until the outside temperature maintains above 40 degrees. If the temperature drops to 40 degrees or below for a few hours, it will damage or kill the mango blooms as well as any small fruits that have formed. You are only doing half the job if you save the tree but allow the blooms to perish in the cold weather.

I also protected two Barbados cherry plants growing in pots using the same bubble-wrap material. I moved these plants against the south side of a shed as a windbreak. One of the plants is the Florida Sweet variety, which has an upright growth habit. The other one is the B-17 that has a bushy growth habit. Without heat, the B-17 variety lost all its leaves and suffered some branch dieback. The Florida Sweet only lost some leaves with no branch dieback. Both plants are now pushing new growth, but the B-17 variety is considerably more sensitive to cold temperatures.

An Alternative to Cold Protection

If you can't take care of your cold-sensitive plants, an alternative is to grow plants that don't require any winter protection. Before buying mango trees a second time around, I decided to invest in plants that do not require winter protection. I now grow eight different varieties of persimmons, three varieties of

peaches, and eight varieties of figs. These plants went dormant and required no winter attention on my part. WOW! That was easy! In late spring to late fall, I enjoy these fruits.

What Didn't Work

Here are some cold protection strategies that I tried that did not work:

- Neutral copper fungicide: it did not offer a single degree of protection against wind chill. It does keep the fungus at bay but nothing else.
- Frost blankets: they do stop the frost from coming in contact with the plants but they offer absolutely no protection against the wind chill. The cold air easily penetrates the pores in the cloth.
- Mulch: I used a heavy layer piled up to three feet high to protect a two-foot high Barbados cherry bush. It protected the roots but every part of the plant above the ground died. I'm not sure if the death was caused by the excess heat trapped by the mulch or as the result of the cold air penetration.

∞ What's Happening ∞ by Paul Zmoda

I've been trying not to dwell on the horror of our brown landscape. I stay busy cleaning up. I went over most citrus by pruning out dead and damaged wood, raking their bases clean and adding some fertilizers.

Here are some observations on the freeze damage. Plants killed to the ground include hibiscus, most annonas, stoppers and other Myrtle family members, such as tropical guavas and grumichama. Also damaged are my tamarind, kwai muk, mango Ceylon olive, sapodilla, canistel, miracle fruit, black sapotes, Java plums, quenepa, ice cream bean and more.

I started many grape cuttings from dormant wood, including two new ones: "Louisiana" and a special Il Primo X Villard Blanc hybrid called "Uva Il Primo Blanco" made by my friend Clifford Ambers in Virginia. My other established bunch grapes from Miami are budding out nicely. I will be growing, experimenting with and providing for sale later on, promising grapes for our area. I prefer bunch grapes to muscadines.

I tried my hand at grafting some "Blanc du Bois" grapes onto Il Primo root stock. I want to see if this will allow Vineyards of Blanc du Bois to be grown in very wet areas, which would otherwise be a poor site for them on their own roots. Il Primo, being bred from a native river bank dweller, succeeds very well in wet, heavy soils.

You can now graft many trees, such as citrus, and stonefruits, such as plums, when the root stocks are actively pushing forth new shoots.

New plantings: squash, pole beans, cucumbers, tomatoes, peppers and potatoes.

∞ Insect Identification Services Offered by Paul Zmoda ∞

At our last meeting, we enjoyed a talk on a most important insect - the honeybee. Other insects may also interest you. I am offering my services to all members who wish to have insects identified. Simply capture the insect(s) and bring it/them to a future meeting. Hard-bodied specimens are best kept dried, while soft-bodied larvae and such are best put into a jar with some rubbing alcohol.

My large insect collections garnered quite a few awards when I was younger in 4-H Entomology as well as helping to earn straight A's in my college "Ento" class.

❧ March's Tasting Table ❧

Thank you to the following folks for their tasty offerings and to all those who did not sign the sheet.
Members who donate food may now receive a ticket for the raffle.

Name	Item	Name	Item
Lohn	Cheesecake	Branesky	Rice & coconut vegetables, cake
Golden	Little smokies	Vega	Rice and chicken
Coronel	Bibinka	Johnston	Cherry cobbler
Beeker	Cheesecake	Brokenbrough	Carrot cake
Shigemura	General Tzo's chicken	Sawada	Cuke kiwi salsa, tomatillo salsa cruda
Lee	Strawberries	Saceda-Bigelow	Empanadas
Cimafranca	Pancit sotanohon	Frankland	Cookies
Maranto	Cherry cobbler	LaValette	Fruitcake
Terenzi	Chocolate/lemon parfait	Austin	Fruit salad
Kirby	Turkey bacon quiche	Newman	Pasta salad
Dexter	Mashed potatoes w/chives	Whitfield	Avocado mousse
Novak	Apple/blueberry crisp, pummelo, chocolate macaroon cookies, juices		

❧ RFCI Plant Exchange ❧

Thanks to all of our donors. Members who donate plant(s) may now receive a ticket for the raffle.

Plant	Donor	Winner
2 Carissa	Bob Heath	S. Lee, R. Shigemura
2 Pineapple	Bob Heath	V. Dickey, M. Lohn
Surinam cherry	Bob Heath	C. Haack
Orange berry	Bob Heath	---
Rose apple	Bob Heath	C. Haack
Female gac	Bob Heath	---
Rio Grande cherry	Bob Heath	Ludwig
Sapodilla	Bob Heath	---
2 Bromeliad spectabilis	Verna Dickey	---
Longan seedling	Ed Musgrave	C. Gamboni
4 Pommello fruit	Ludwig	---
Loquat	Judy Cimafranca	Vega

❧ MAX TAPENER Plant Tying Tool For Sale ❧

Uses green plastic tape to attach plants and vines to stakes, wires, etc. Comes with extra rolls of tape, blades and staples. Used one season. \$65.00 OBO (or best offer). Contact Paul Zmoda at Flatwoodsfarm@aol.com or at 813-932-2469.

♻️ Recycle Those Banana Peels ☞

Do you have a green thumb? Household plants and outside gardens require fertilization. A great way to give your plants nutrients is with a banana peel. The banana peel is very rich in potassium and phosphorus. Banana peels work well with roses.

Here is how to use a banana peel to fertilize your soil for your plants.

- Remove the peel from the banana.
- Place the banana peel on a cookie sheet to let it air dry.
- Grab a paper bag or envelope.
- Crumble the dried banana peel and place it in the bag.
- Let the banana sit at room temperature for about two days.
- When you care for your plant, give it a potassium treat of crumbled banana peel.
- Mix it well in the soil to ensure the roots are feed evenly.

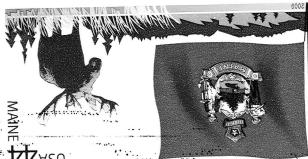


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