



# RFCI

<http://www.rarefruit.org>

June 2010

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

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

## ∞ Upcoming Programs and Events ∞

**June 13:** Dr. Jonathon Crane, Tropical Fruit Specialist, UF IFAS will speak on *Avocados*

## ∞ Welcome to Our Newest Members ∞

☼ Mike Tobias and Bob Osswald of St. Petersburg      ☼ Kimi, Bricen & Tony Broccone of South Pasadena

☼ Roger Stewart of Plant City



## ∞ What's Happening ∞

by Paul Zmoda



Wow! Loquats are happening! The fruit clusters, thinned naturally by the cold freezes, suddenly caught my attention on two of our trees. Bright yellow, fat, juicy and larger than usual, these temperate members of the rose family are surely welcome after several years of mediocre crops.

I took many bagsful to work where everyone enjoyed them. In return, one friend brought bags of black mulberries - not just black, but *Morus nigra* - finely textured, uniform in size and simply delicious.

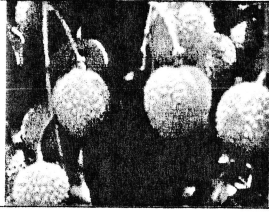
As luck would have it, when I went to check them, two different pawpaw trees were in bloom. One tree, our Florida native *Asimina parviflora* held both male and female flowers. I used my trusty brush to transfer pollen. The other tree (rare here), *Asimina triloba*, had but a single flower in its female stage. I used the pollen of the native pawpaw on it. Now, after a week, there are tiny fruit setting on both trees. These tiny fruit aborted soon after with the advent of strong, drying winds. Maybe, next year?

My Brazos blackberries are starting to yield their first crop. Planted on a site which maybe gets too much rain runoff, I'm happy to say that it doesn't seem to hurt them. In fact, the plants are really growing and sending up many strong new shoots everywhere. The berries are more than one inch long and are very sweet and juicy. They are so attractive - jet black and glistening in the sunshine.

New plantings: grapes, banana.

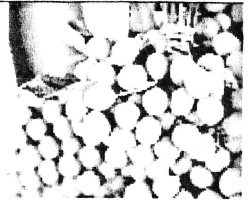
President: Paul Branesky

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



## ∞ Lychees & Longans: A Talk by Gene Joyner ∞

by Bob Heath



If you haven't heard Gene speak, you probably wouldn't know that he was a walking encyclopedia when it comes to fruit trees. As has been his program for the last several years, Gene spends his Mother's Day holiday speaking at our club meeting, and this year's meeting was no exception.

Gene began his talk with a description of his gardens located in Palm Beach. He has the largest collection of tropic fruiting trees in Palm Beach County – over 150 kinds of tropical fruit in his 2-1/2 acre rainforest garden. He also has some commercial planting on 2 acres next door, including a jackfruit grove of 125 trees, a carambola grove with 17 different varieties and about 700 banana trees – a lot of fruit, which he sells in addition to the gardens. Gene started the gardens in 1970. In July, they will be 40 years old.

At this point, Gene wanted to emphasize two very important fruits in Florida – lychee and longan – both of which are Chinese fruits from the Southern part of China. In the central part of South Florida, we have commercial groves but most of the groves are around Homestead. On the West Coast, they are on Pine Island. Many years ago, most of the groves were around Sebring and South. Some of those trees are still there. There is an association of lychee and longan growers in Homestead.

### *Lychees Are "Alternate Bearing" Fruits*

Most of the varieties of lychees grown in Florida are Brewster and Mauritius, which have about a four-week difference in time of maturity. This keeps pickers working longer. Lychees tend to have "alternate bearing," which means one year the crop will almost break the limbs and the next year, you get, maybe, 10% or 20%. The next year, it goes back to the heavy crop. Lychees blossom most years in late February and March. This year, however, there was no blossoms until mid-April – about 4 to 6 weeks late. Gene added that he has a lot of Lychees in his gardens that are still flowering and they haven't set fruit yet. With the late bloom, he expects to get fruit through July and into August.

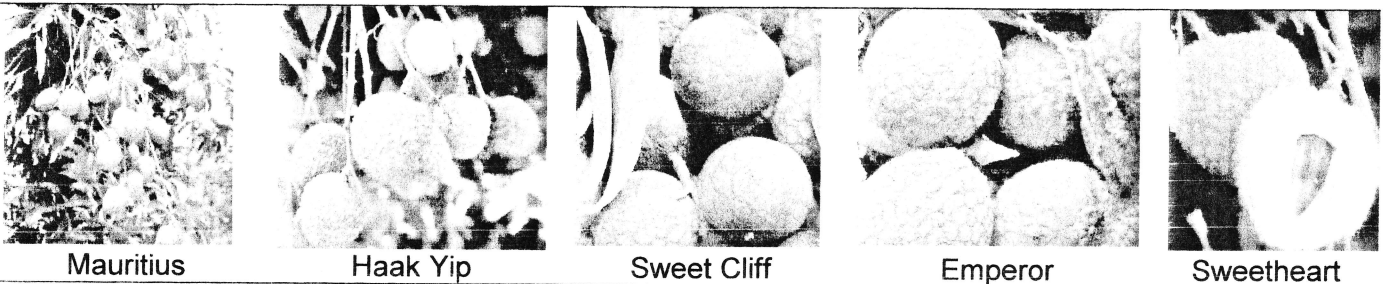
### *Propagated by Air Layering*

The lychee trees that you see in nurseries usually are air-layered, but they will grow from seed. This is not recommended since it might take up to 30 years for trees grown from seed to put on their first fruit. The earliest you might see fruit is 5 to 20 years. Tests have shown that none of the cultivars grown in the Orient where lychees and longans originated are better than the ones we have here in Florida. So, today, the trees are propagated entirely by air layering. Air layers take about 8 to 10 weeks to produce roots and to start growing. You can get fruit the next year. Nurseries put on air layers in the summer and take the air layer off in September or October. Then, they plant them in a 3-gallon pot. In February, that little 30" plant may have blossoms on it. When people see that, they say, "Oh boy! I've got to have that." It's because the plant came from a mature branch with went through its normal flowering cycle and fruited just like the original tree does. Many think you can only air layer small branches, but Gene said there is a nursery in his county that regularly air layers branches 2" in diameter that are 4' to 8' long. The sphagnum moss used is the size of a football because it has to grow a lot of roots to survive. When the roots are ready, the nursery cuts them off with a chain saw, puts them in 10-gallon pots and places them in a mist house. In 6 months, this tree may sell for \$100 to \$150. This whole procedure works equally well for longans, too.

### *Recommended Varieties*

There are some other varieties of lychees that are excellent, such as Emperor, which has the longest fruit of all the named varieties. Most lychees average 18 to 20 per pound. The Emperor variety takes only 8 to make a pound. The fruit are the size of duck eggs. The seed is large, but it is of good quality. The Emperor variety is also native to China. For many years, China would not allow it to be exported. In the 80s, it was smuggled out of the country and is now available in South Florida where the fruit retails for about \$8.00 per pound. If you want a lychee with big fruit, Gene suggests the Emperor variety. If you want a lychee with small fruit, Gene suggests the Haak Yip or "Black Leaf" lychee. The Haak Yip has an aborted seed, which is called "chicken tongue." This variety tends to be an alternate-bearing fruit.

Sweetheart, another variety that is very popular, is being planted in Homestead. It's a beautiful, dark red fruit with a good flavor. A favorite of Gene's, the Sweet Cliff, is an average-sized fruit that bears heavy in Gene's gardens every year. It usually ripens in June. The Mauritius is the earliest variety; it ripens in May.



Mauritius

Haak Yip

Sweet Cliff

Emperor

Sweetheart

Pictures copied from <http://www.lycheesonline.com>

### *Tall at Maturity*

In time, the lychee trees will get tall – up to 60' – but you can only pick the first 10' to 15'. The rats and squirrels get the rest. For this reason, most people top their trees at 10' to 15' in summer after the harvest.

### *Be Careful of Over Fertilization*

Avoid heavy fertilization after mid-to-late summer. Too much nitrogen late in the year will not allow trees to go dormant. Both lychees and longans need a long dormant season to produce heavy flowering. Gene suggests that you do not apply fertilizer at all in late summer. In the case of this past winter, do not fertilize after a damaging freeze. The tree will be putting all its resources into growing back its damaged limbs.

### *Fruit Freezes Well*

In those seasons when you get an abundance of fruit, be aware that lychees and longans freeze well. The fruit can be kept for over a year with no loss of quality. Just put them into a zip-lock bag and date them.

### *Caring for Longans*

The #1 variety of longans grown in Florida is the "Kohala," which originally came from Hawaii. The fruit is very large – 1" to 1-1/2". Clusters can have up to 60 fruit. To get larger fruit, you need to thin the clusters. Once the fruit is set, you can go in and cut the clusters in half. The remaining fruit will get twice as big.

Longans can be grown from seed, but it can take 7 to 8 years for the tree to fruit.

## ☞ Did You Know? ☞

One cup of fresh lychee fruit:

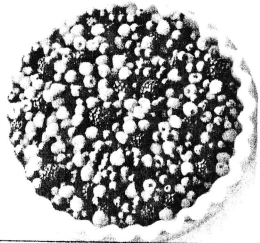
- Contains only 125 calories
- Has more of the antioxidant Vitamin C than oranges or lemons
- About as much dietary fiber as an apple with the skin on
- Is loaded with potassium

## ☞ Membership Directories ☞

New Membership Directories will be available at the July meeting. Please notify Charles Novak at (813) 754-1399 or [charles.novak@gmail.com](mailto:charles.novak@gmail.com) if you would like to make any changes in your name, mailing address, phone number or e-mail address.

## ☞ Sign Up for Email ☞

Our RFCI newsletter is now available by e-mail. Sign up for an electronic copy today by notifying Charles or Linda Novak at (813) 754-1399 or [charles.novak@gmail.com](mailto:charles.novak@gmail.com).



## ☞ May'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
Coronel	Maja blanca mais	Lohn	Brownies
Broccone	Cold pasta salad	Vega	Rice and chicken
K. Johnston	Cherry cobbler	T. Johnston	Creamed potatoes
Ferreira	Potato salad	Saceda-Bigelow	Spinach quiche
Gamboni	Choc. Brownies	Sawada	Assorted appetizers
Von Maluski	Crab deviled eggs	Rubenstein	Potato kugel
LaValette	Potato salad	Sweet	Apple mulberry pie
McAveety	Cacao nibs, Strawberry jam	Otto	Cherry, peach nut cake
Lee	Mac 'n cheese, strawberry lemon juice	Scott	Florida peaches marinated in sugar
Novak	Blueberry pound cake, berry salsa and chips, juices	Shigemura	Pina colada dome cake, strawberry dome cake



## ☞ May's Plant Exchange ☞

Just a reminder that members who donate food  
may now receive a ticket for the raffle.  
Members who donate plant(s) may now receive a  
ticket for the raffle.

Plant	Donor	Winner
2 Carissa	Bob Heath	V. Gamboni, B. Provencher
Papaya with Rose Apple	Bob Heath	M. Lohn
2 Pineapple (1 Abacca)	Bob Heath	J. A. Oliver
Passion fruit	Bob Heath	M. McDuffie
Orange berry	Bob Heath	C. Gamboni
Chaya spinach	Bob Heath	R. Roeks
Burbank cactus	Bob Heath	B. Provencher
Eugenia Surinam cherry	Ed Musgrave	---
3 Barbados cherry	Charles Novak	T. Ferreira, B. Heath
Purple yam	Charles Novak	M. Whitfield
Basket plums/blueberries	Linda Novak	S. Saceda-Bigelow
Yautia lila	Vega	---
Sugar cane	Johnston	S. Sumner
Bananas	J. Coronel	B. Oer
Mother's Day Gift	Linda Novak	J. Cimafranca
3 Rosemary	T. Scott	Saceda-Bigelow, R. Davis
Avocado	Saceda-Bigelow	J. Ritcer
Apple banana	J. Oliver	C. Haack
Zebra banana	J. Oliver	---
Kaffir lily	J. Oliver	---
Pomelo grapefruit	J. Cimafranca	V. Gamboni
Pineapple	J. Cimafranca	B. Provencher
Alma fig	T. Ferreira	J. Ritcer

## ☞ About the Longan ☞

According to [naturalfoodbenefits.com](http://naturalfoodbenefits.com), "the longan has been referred to as *the little brother of the lychee*. Longan is slightly smaller than lychee and has a dull brown skin, which is smoother than that of the lychee. The fruit taste is similar. The value of longan on the market is due to the fact that its season follows that of the lychee, extending the period when this type of fruit is available. According to the esteemed scholar, Prof. G. Weidman Groff, the longan is less important to the Chinese as an edible fruit and more widely used than the lychee in Oriental medicine."

## ∞ Questions and Answers About Lychee Fruit ∞

10-46

This interesting set of questions and answers was taken from Lychees Online; [www.lycheesonline.com](http://www.lycheesonline.com), written by Krystal Folino and Bill Mee:

### Lychee Fruit

#### **You say that lychee fruit is very sweet, but the fruit that I bought in the store is bitter and unpleasant tasting. Why is this?**

Lychee fruit does not ripen after picking, unlike other tropical fruits such as mangoes, avocados and bananas. If lychee fruit is picked early it is almost always bitter tasting and often leaves an unpleasant aftertaste. Often times large commercial fruit growers pick their fruit prematurely in order to get it into the marketplace when the wholesale prices are higher. If lychee fruit is properly harvested, at the peak of ripeness, it is delicious, sweet and fragrant. Taste statistics indicate that 91% of people who try properly ripened and harvested lychee fruit find the experience excellent. In our experience small Florida growers who focus more on quality, rather than profitability, produce the best lychee fruit in the country. Do to our unique climate conditions Florida is the lychee growing capitol of the US and one of the only states where they can be successfully grown. We recommend that you buy direct from Florida growers or look for the "Fresh From Florida" logo if you are buying lychees in a supermarket.

#### **What is the correct way to eat a lychee?**

As fast as possible so that you can move on to the next one. Actually, all kidding aside, we like to bite a small piece off around the stem and then squeeze the fruit so that the aril (the fleshy part around the seed) pops into your mouth.

#### **What is the difference between a lychee fruit and a lychee nut?**

Lychee nuts is a name that usually refers to dried lychee fruits but is not really a nut. A true nut is actually the edible seed of certain fruits. Lychees are much tastier when eaten fresh; however, when you can't get fresh lychees the dried lychees are a great alternative.

#### **When is the season for lychee fruit?**

Lychee season is during the summer, May & June in South Florida (northern hemisphere) and December to February in Australia (southern hemisphere). On average the season lasts about six weeks at the most.

#### **What should I do after I receive my fresh lychees?**

You should immediately place the lychees under refrigeration. If you do not plan to eat all of your lychees within the next several days you can freeze them. Frozen lychees are also very delicious and taste like a fine sorbet. If you freeze them even in months like November and December they still taste wonderful. You should enclose them in a zip-lock bag.

#### **Can you freeze lychee fruit?**

YES! Lychee fruit is wonderful when frozen. Frozen lychees are like a fine sorbet. We bring frozen lychees to parties during the holidays and we never have to take any back home with us.

#### **How do you freeze lychee fruit? Whole with skin on or do they need to be peeled first?**

You can freeze them with the skin on. I put mine in Zip-Lock freezer bags. The color of the skin will turn a brownish color, but it doesn't affect the taste of the fruit. I have never peeled my lychees before freezing them so I don't know what effect that would have on them. I image they would not last as long peeled because the tough skin on the outside act like a suit of armor protecting the tender fruit inside.

### **If I am diabetic can I eat lychees?**

"It's hard to beat a fresh fruit salad, papaya, pears, apples, oranges, Chinese plums, mango, longan and litchi. Fruit is an excellent source of fiber, vitamins and minerals, and has zero fat. Everyone, including people with diabetes, should eat three to four servings of fruit a day." This is a quote from the article "Diabetic Guide to Chinese Food" in Diabetic Gourmet Magazine

### **Some of my fruit have small seeds and many more have large seeds. Is this situation normal?**

Yes, small seeds are the exception in the case of Brewster lychees, however, despite the predominance of full size seeds the Brewster variety is a larger fruit in general and has a higher flesh to seed ratio than many other varieties. Mauritius lychees have small seeds, but they are also a smaller fruit. Haak-Yip lychees tend to have a predominance of small "chicken tongue" seeds and Bengal seeds are relatively small.

### **Why does my fruit have stems on them?**

We find that the fruit keeps longer when some of the stem remains. If the stem is pulled off this can rupture the skin of the fruit accelerating the spoiling process.

### **Will I get sick if I eat too many lychees at one sitting?**

When we pick lychees, we eat almost every other fruit that we pick. So far none of us have ever become sick. Su Tung Po, the greatest Chinese poet/painter of the Song Dynasty, wrote a poem while he was exiled in Guangdong province in Southern China for his politically satirical writings, wrote a poem about consoling himself by eating 300 lychees a day.

### **∞ Lychee Martini ∞**

By: Bellakitty

Are you tired of paying upwards of \$15.00 for a drink at those trendy restaurants and bars? This drink is refreshing, Asian-inspired, and sure to impress your guests or that someone special!



#### **Ingredients:**

- 5 ice cubes
- 1 (1.5 fluid ounce) jigger vodka
- 1 fluid ounce peach schnapps
- 1 fluid ounce white cranberry juice
- 1 ounce lychee juice
- 1 lychee, for garnish

#### **Directions:**

Place ice into a cocktail shaker. Pour in vodka, peach schnapps, cranberry juice, and lychee juice. Cover and shake vigorously until the outside of the cocktail shaker has frosted.

Strain into a chilled martini glass; garnish with a lychee fruit. (copied from allrecipes.com)

### Longan Fruit Health Benefits according to Buzzle.com

Following are a few health benefits of longan fruit.

- Longan fruit stimulates the proper functioning of the heart and spleen and improves blood flow in the body.
- Longan can be used as an anti-depressant as it has a soothing effect on the nervous system.
- A concoction of the dried flesh of longan fruit is used as a tonic to cure insomnia
- The kernel of the longan seeds has certain beneficial ingredients, such as saponin, tannin and fat, which might help to constrict the flow of blood in case of an injury.

According to an ancient belief in Vietnam, the seed of the longan fruit, when pressed against a snakebite is believed to act as an anti-venom.

**Note:** Always seek advice from a professional before using any part of a plant medicinally.



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