

RFCI

March 2016

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

Meetings are held the second Sunday, 2:00 P.M.
at the Christ the King Church, 821 S. Dale Mabry,
Tampa

<http://www.rarefruit.org>

Tampa.Bay.RFCI@gmail.com

<http://www.facebook.com/TampaBayChapterRareFruitCouncilIntlInc>

∞ Upcoming Programs and Events ∞

March 13th - The History of the Tampa Bay Chapter of RFCI. The March meeting is an organizational meeting of our club's history: where it came from, where it is and where it's going. A Power Point presentation and interaction will be led by Tom Schaefer. The election of officers for the next year will follow. There will be a plant raffle and buffet.

March 25th from 10am to 2pm. Special Farmers Market at the James A Haley VA hospital in Tampa. The Club will have a table set up at the VA hospital in Tampa for a special Farmer's Market honoring nutritional awareness month. Members may bring locally grown fruits and fruiting plants. If you would like to volunteer to hand out literature, or have plants or fruit you would like to provide, please contact Fran Grossman fgvto@aol.com.

April 9th and 10th - The Spring Plant Sale at USF Gardens! There will be no regular meeting. This sale is a big fundraiser event for the Club. We'll need volunteers for Friday set-up, and at the Sale. Start planting and getting plants ready to sell if you are bringing plants to sell at this event. More information, and sign-up at the March meeting.



President: Fred Engelbrecht; Program Manager: Tom Schaefer; Secretary: Joe Porter, Treasurer: Susan McAveety; Newsletter/Membership: Denise Provencher; Photographs: Fred Engelbrecht

The Tampa Bay RFCI display at the Florida State Fair 2016 came in fourth place!



*Creating and setting up the beautiful display are: (from L to R)
Shige Sawada, Ron Shigemura, George Campani and Bill Vega.*



Part of the Citrus Fruit Display



Volunteers preparing fruit for the Tasting



∞ What's Happening ∞

by Paul Zmoda

I held a free pruning class on January 30th. A dozen folks showed up to see how grapes, persimmons, stone fruits, and more are trimmed prior to their fruiting seasons getting under way. While leading the class, I noticed some pods have formed on our Ice Cream Bean Tree *Inga edulis*.

While trimming back overgrown trees at our new home, I tripped and fell - hard! on my right shoulder. I fear that I did some significant damage to muscles and connective tissues. Now I must see a doctor and take things slower. I can't stand it!

I bench-grafted a half dozen grape scions onto the 'Il Primo' rootstocks. Since 'Il Primo' is fully adapted to growing in wet soils, I'm hoping that the top-grafted grapes will be able to grow in wet soils successfully also.



Avocados are blooming now and my top-grafted 'Brazos Belle' scions are popping their buds on the large 'Fantastic' tree, which is starting to suffer a scale insect problem. Another pest, lacebugs, are invading the soursop tree. I wiped all the soursop leaves with rubbing alcohol to slow them down.

Speaking of soursop, the lone fruit ripened, and we ate it. A bit fibrous, but juicy and delicious.

New plantings: seven olive trees, two 'Guthrie' plums, two limes, and a longan.

∞ Keyhole Gardens ∞

Looking for a fun project for the kids? Try a keyhole garden.

A keyhole garden is the ultimate raised-bed planter. It is often built in the shape of a circle measuring about 6 feet in diameter that stands waist-high and is notched like a pie with a slice cut away. A hole in the center holds a composting basket that moistens and nourishes the soil. The garden, which from above looks like a keyhole, can be built with recycled materials and requires less water than a conventional garden.

This style of garden is great for drought areas, or those areas with a dry season. Keyhole gardens are very popular in Africa and parts of the world with a similar climate. Make them with recycled materials you have on hand, such as kitchen waste, newspapers, cardboard, even twigs and leaves.

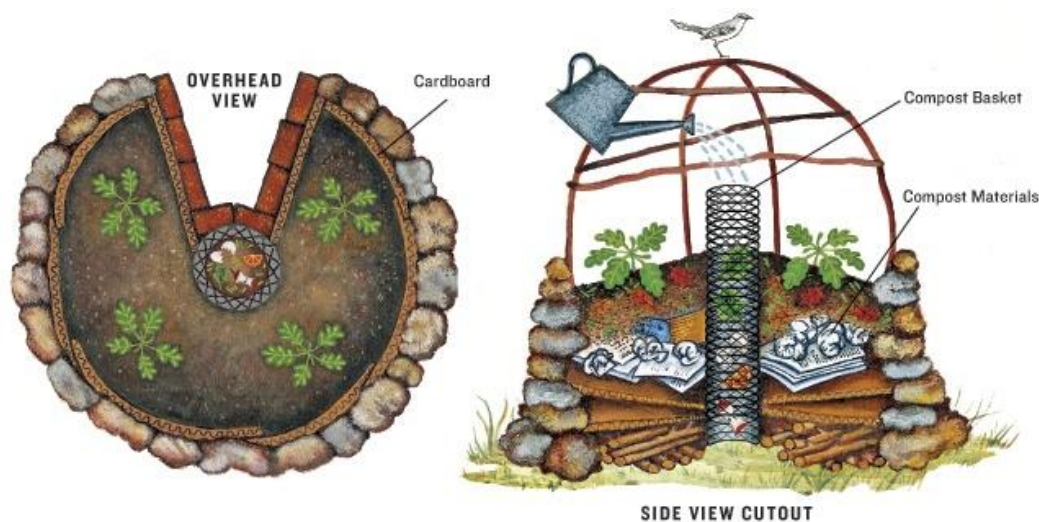
They are perfect for older, otherwise movement restricted or disabled individuals because of the additional height off of the ground, meaning you don't have to bend over so much!

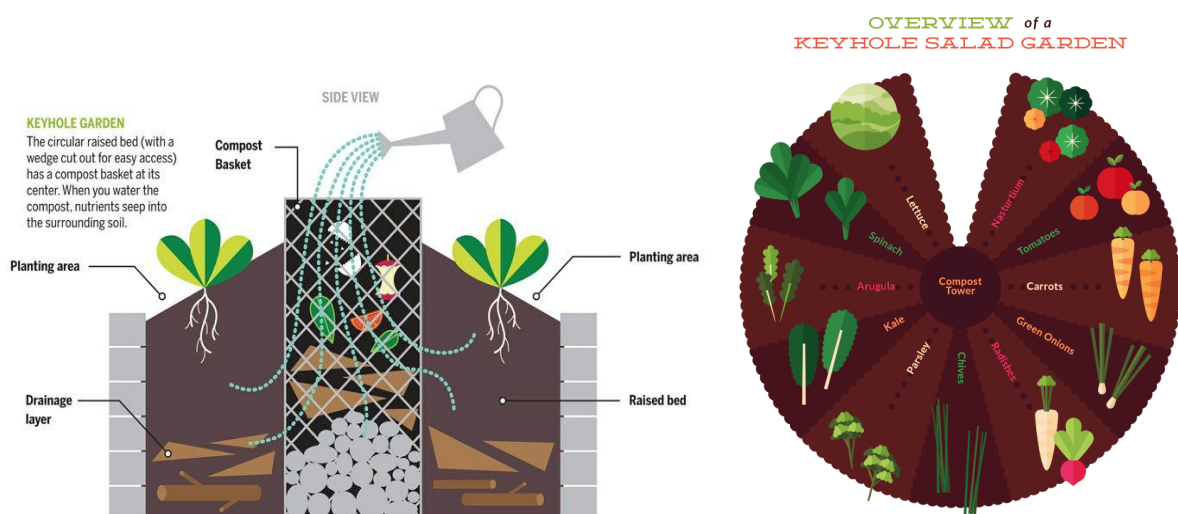
Keyhole gardens use very little water, and get natural fertilizer from the compost in the center. They take up little space, but produce a lot.

Keyhole gardens can be designed with a theme in mind, such as a pizza garden, with herbs and vegetables that are used to top pizza with. Or, maybe a salad garden theme, incorporating a variety of colorful greens, tomatoes, and salad herbs.

The drawings below show how to construct a keyhole garden.

Have fun with it!





Interesting fact.....Cranberries bounce. Due to air pockets within the berries that allow them to naturally float, cranberries do indeed bounce. This magical property was discovered in 1880 by John "Peg Leg" Webb, when he dropped a bunch of cranberries while going down a set of stairs. Growers still use the bounce test to determine quality and sort berries accordingly, with a tool called the "bounce board separator". The higher the bounce, the better the berry.



⌘ Club Notes ⌘

We have some coupons for a 10% discount for RFCI members, at a new garden shop opening in South Tampa called Gardensmith Plant Shop. Pick up a coupon at the March meeting, or just mention that you are a member of the Rare Fruit Council to receive the discount. They are located at 4113 Henderson Blvd, Tampa, 813-898-0228, or gardensmithtampa.com

We welcome your submissions for the newsletter, pictures, notes of interest, events in your area, tips you've tried or learned that you would like to share with others - please send them to bdprovencher@tampabay.rr.com
Submissions for the next newsletter due by: March 22nd.

☞ Chocolate Vine (*Akebia quinata*) ☞

This unusual and very ornamental fruiting vine may be more known for its beautiful purple flowers, with a distinctive chocolate/vanilla fragrance. The fruit itself is edible. The mild, viscous pulp of the soft fruit is eaten raw with lemon juice or pureed and made into a cream or a drink. It has a slight coconut milk flavor. Young shoots are used in salads or for salt pickling. The bitter skin of the fruit is fried and eaten and the attractive five-part leaves used as a tea substitute. The empty pod is stuffed and deep fried. The fruit is also used to make wine. The seed oil is used to make soap and as a vegetable oil. In fact the edible seeds are about 33% oil, but on the bitter side. Akebia fruit is high in protein. A 70-gram serving of the fruit has 57 calories and 46mg of vitamin C. Akebia is also now cultivated as a crop in Japan providing a steady seasonal market. The vines can be used for weaving, as they are flexible and sturdy.



The plant is native to Japan, China, and Korea, but is also found naturalized in much of the United States. In cooler regions of the country it can be invasive, but not so much in Florida. Akebia is great for growing on a trellis, or over an arbor. Plant somewhere where the fragrance can be enjoyed. Although both female and male parts can appear on one plant, it's best to plant more than one to ensure fruiting. Akebia is hardy from zone 4-9.

Plants prefer some shade, especially in the southern end of their range. They grow quickly 15-20 feet in height. Deciduous in their northern range, they are semi-evergreen in the south. They also enjoy organic matter mixed in with their soil, but don't really require fertilizer. Once established, they are drought tolerant.

Propagation is by seeds or tip cuttings.

Chocolate Vine in Blossom, photo by valentine.gr



The objectives of The Tampa Bay Rare Fruit Council International:

To inform the public about the merits and uses of fruits common to this region and encourages the cultivation, collection, propagation and growth of fruits that are exotic or unusual to west central Florida. The club also encourages the development of new fruit varieties, cooperating with local and foreign agricultural agencies.

Tampa Bay RFCI
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