



RFCI

April 2021

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

Meetings are held the second Sunday, 2:00 P.M.
at the American Legion Post 111,
6918 N. Florida Ave, Tampa 33604

<http://www.rarefruit.org>

Tampa.Bay.RFCI@gmail.com

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

∞ Upcoming Programs and Events ∞



April 11 - Mark your calendar! The Club will have one more plant sale before summer, at the Legion Parking lot on April 11, from 9-1pm. Selling is open to all members. Fruit trees and plants, garden plants and flowers, fruit, garden art, accessories, tools, books, what have you. Let's make it festive! Stop by and say hello!



Note: The Club has tentative plans for a talk on mangoes in June, and a fruit tasting in July....all dependent of course on government allowances for large group gatherings. Hopefully, with the vaccine program well underway, the Covid situation may improve by summer. Keep your fingers crossed!

∞ Welcome New Members ∞

Jonathan Elder

Tampa



In Memoriam



Esme Chinnery - Tampa - member since 2010

President: Fred Engelbrecht; Vice Presidents: Cora Coronel and Kenny Gil; Secretary: Jager Mitchell;
Treasurer: Susan McAveety; Newsletter/Membership: Denise Provencher

∞ What's Happening ∞

by Paul Zmoda

This is a great time of year – everything is budding, the weather is perfect, and pests haven't been a problem....yet. I start my day by checking all our plants with a small bucket of soapy water in hand. When I spot insect pests, I knock them into the bucket. The first pests of my growing season are grape flea beetles, newly hatched lubber grasshoppers and leaf-footed bugs.

My mayhaw seedlings from last year's crop were big enough to use as rootstock so I grafted them with scions of good varieties I had marked on my oldest tree years before. These then got planted out in the orchard.

Our mangoes and avocados are loaded with flowers and developing fruit.

I bottled my 2020 vintage wine and gave a talk on home wine-making to the Davis Island Garden Club.



Photo – Paul Zmoda



Leaf footed bug



newly hatched lubbers



grape flea beetle

Pineberries

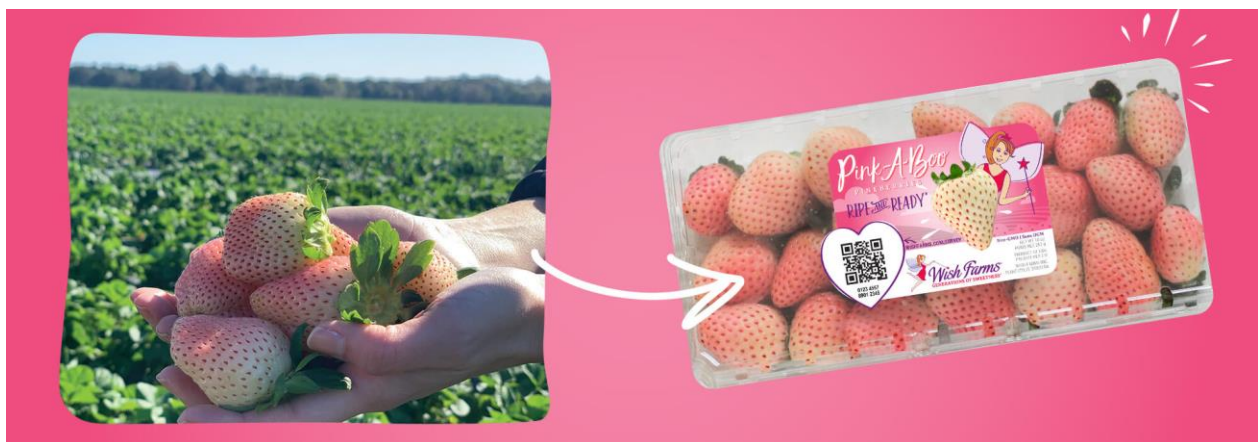
The latest excitement in the Florida berry production is the Pineberry. Looks like a strawberry, but it's white, and tastes like a pineapple, hence the name. Everyone tasting it is getting a unique experience. Some say it tastes like pear, peach, apricot, even citrus, with the notes of pineapple.



Originating in Chile in the 1700's, the pineberry is more commonly grown commercially in Europe, Japan and other Asian countries where they fetch high prices.

In 2012, Dr. Vance Whitaker, a strawberry breeder at the University of Florida decided to research the fruit to determine if it had a place in Florida's crops. After years of cultivating and breeding, a berry was developed that would grow in Florida's climate. The result is the Pink-a-Boo pineberry. You can tell when the fruit is ripe as the little seeds on the outside of the fruit will turn red, and the fruit itself will blush. This is helpful in keeping the birds and wildlife from eating the berries, as they think the light-colored fruit are still unripe.

There are 25 Central Florida farms at this time growing them on about 12 acres, but next year there will be as many as 200 acres devoted to pineberries. So, this berry will be tough to find this season, but in the future should be easier.



Wishfarms.com

Rare Fruit Tree Sale

****New Location - Huge Outdoor Area****

Sunday, May 16th, 2021, 9am-3pm

Premier Sports Campus

5895 Post Blvd, Lakewood Ranch, FL 34211

Exit 217 (Route 70) off I-75, go east 4.65 miles and left on Post Blvd

Ample Free Parking

Restrooms

Expert Advice



- Apples (Low Chill varieties)
- Atemoya
- Avocado
- Banana
- Barbados Cherry
- Bay Leaf
- Blackberry
- Black Sapote
- Blueberry
- Carambola
- Caimito
- Canistel
- Cashew
- Cherimoya
- Coconut
- Figs
- Grapes

- Guava
- Jaboticaba
- Jackfruit
- Jujube
- Kumquat
- Longan
- Loquat
- Lychee
- Mangoes
- Dwarf Mangoes
- Macadamia Nut
- Malay Apple
- Miracle fruit
- Mulberry
- Monstera
- Papaya
- Passion fruit
- Pineapple

- Plantain
- Peaches (Low Chill)
- Pears (Low Chill)
- Persimmon
- Plum
- Pomegranate
- Pummelo
- Raspberry
- Rio Grande Cherry
- Rollina
- Sapodilla
- Soursop
- Star Fruit
- Strawberry
- Sugar Apple
- Surinam Cherry
- Wax Jambu
- White Sapote

Also other fruits, herbs, vines, and more

20+ Vendors

All plants subject to availability

Sponsored by Manatee Rare Fruit Council, a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization

No Entry Without Masks; Safe Social Distancing Required

Most vendors accept credit cards, but bringing cash is a good idea.

No ATM onsite

Further information at mrhc.org

Member Questions

Question: Are there any native varieties of edible blueberry for central fl. We've tried numerous big box available varieties and all seem to get some sort of problem and die after a few years.

Answer: According to the Florida Native Plant Society, there is a much under-used Native blueberry, *Vaccinium darrowii*.



This small shrub grows 2'x2', is a long lived perennial, has flowers of white and pink, the fruit is blue, purple, and black, and definitely edible for humans and wildlife.

Like other blueberries, *darrowii* prefers acidic soil, and afternoon shade.

It's a very attractive plant with evergreen foliage tinged with purple, and well worth hunting for, and highly recommended. Some nurseries and native plant groups may have it.

Vaccinium darrowii is generally pest and disease free, and drought tolerant. Do not overfertilize with chemical fertilizers, that can kill plants outright. Choose mulch and compost products such as oak or pine leaves.

Be sure you are purchasing *Vaccinium darrowii* - not *Vaccinium corymbosum* 'Darrow.'

As with any blueberry, the plants are self-fertile but will gain more fruit production if other varieties are nearby for cross-pollination.



Question: How long will it take to get fruit from a Haas avocado seed? My daughter planted one many years ago, now she is in college, and still no fruit?

Answer: Avocadoes from seed can take 5- 13 years on average to produce fruit. Sometimes it can take longer than that! Best bet is to purchase a grafted Florida Haas tree as you will get fruit in 3-5 years or even earlier. Grafted trees will produce quicker and be true to variety. The Florida Haas avocado is bright green and has less fat and calories than the California variety. This variety has been bred to take Florida's humid climate. The tree is hardy to 25 degrees F.

Question: We have a chinaberry tree in our backyard, and have noticed birds eating the fruit. Is this fruit good to eat?

Answer: NO!!! Chinaberry (*Melia azedarach*) is very toxic to mammals. Birds somehow are able to eat this fruit without ill affect, but for humans and other mammals, merely a few fruits can kill. Meliotoxins are present in all parts of the tree, but are especially concentrated in the fruit. Consumption can cause drooling, vomiting, diarrhea, seizures, and death. Considered a weed by many, don't let the beautiful, fragrant flowers fool you. Dogs and young children can fall victim to eating this fruit. The tree is very common in Florida – often seen on fence lines, backyards, and roadsides. Be careful.



∞ Club Notes ∞

Contributing to the newsletter is a great way to share what you are doing in your garden with other members, learn what other members are growing, and get your questions answered.

Your submissions for the newsletter, pictures, notes of interest, events, tips, recipes, questions, etc. are especially needed - please send them to bdprovencher@tampabay.rr.com
Submissions for the next newsletter due by: **April 22nd**.

The Club would love to hear from anyone interested in joining the Board. It's a great way to learn the goings on within the Club and being involved in planning events, such as the plants sales, farmer markets, fruit tastings, and the Citrus Celebration at the State Fair.

Note: The election of the new Board members will be rescheduled when regular meetings resume. If interested, please come to the next meeting once meetings resume.

∞ Membership information ∞

NEW MEMBERS

Download and fill out a membership application from: <https://rarefruit.org/membership/>,
and send with check or money order for \$20 made out to Tampa Bay RFCI to:
Tampa Bay RFCI, 12722 Prosser Rd., Dade City, FL 33525

RENEWING MEMBERS

Send check or money order for \$20 made out to Tampa Bay RFCI and mail to:
Tampa Bay RFCI, 12722 Prosser Rd., Dade City, FL 33525





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
12722 Prosser Rd.
Dade City, FL 33525