



# RFCI

January 2023

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

<http://www.rarefruit.org>  
[Tampa.Bay.RFCI@gmail.com](mailto:Tampa.Bay.RFCI@gmail.com)  
<http://www.facebook.com/TampaBayChapterRareFruitCouncilIntlInc>

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

## ⌘ Upcoming Programs and Events ⌘



efforts are to investigate potential alternative crops for the Central Florida area.

**January 8<sup>th</sup> – Passiflora in Florida** – Mark Bailey, a University of Florida faculty member in Marion County, will be speaking about the edible species of Passiflora suitable for growing in the Central Florida region. Focus will be on the Passiflora edulis, with key details and specifics on maximizing fruit production. Mark has more than 10 years experience with the University Extension, and more than twenty years of agriculture and horticultural experience. His

## Call for volunteers!!!!



### **Save the date! February 9-20, 2023 is the Florida State Fair.**

The Club is now looking for volunteers to work on the Clubs' display that will be present during the entire length of the Fair, and also for volunteers to help at the Citrus Celebration, which next year will be held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of the Fair.

If you know of any citrus fruit that may be available to bring for citrus tasting, also let George know.

Please contact George Campani at [Kamp177@yahoo.com](mailto:Kamp177@yahoo.com), or 727-787-2639 to let him know you would like to volunteer for these activities.

## ⌘ Welcome New Members ⌘

Amy Meesko Lakeland

Kimberly Gonzalez Tampa

President: Hillary Cosenza; Vice President: Dylan Chadwell; Secretary: Jager Mitchell;  
Treasurer: Susan McAveety; Newsletter/Membership: Denise Provencher

## Scenes from the Holiday Social

Photos by Paul Branesky





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## ∞ What's Happening ∞

by Paul Zmoda

Happy New Year to all! 2022 was certainly challenging; let's hope 2023 will be better. The weather lately has been ideal – not just for growing, but for working outdoors without dying of heat stroke.

On the opposite side of a thermometer, I got to see frost on the ground a couple of times back in October when I traveled to Maryland and Pennsylvania for a family reunion. I had just barely missed pawpaw season up there, but my brother was kind enough to collect some wild ones and keep them refrigerated until I could, at last, feast on this large, native American fruit. Some were so-so in flavor, but several were very tasty, reminding me of banana-vanilla-mango custard. I can only imagine how delicious the many improved pawpaw cultivars are. I brought back seeds to grow even though we are way south of the normal growing range.

New planting: one FHIA-18 banana and lots more cool weather vegetables like onions, radishes, turnip, carrots and arugula.



Delicious Pawpaw – photo Paul Zmoda

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## Local County Extension Offices

Pinellas County

<https://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/Pinellas/gardenhelp@pinellascounty.org>

(727) 582-2100 12520 Ulmerton Road, Largo, FL 33774

Hillsborough County

<https://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/Hillsborough/hillsborough@ifas.ufl.edu>

(813) 744-5519 5339 County Road 579, Seffner, FL 33584-3334

Pasco County

<https://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/Pasco/cporter@pascocountyfl.net>

(352)-518-0156 36702 State Road 52, Dade City, FL 33525-5198

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## The Citrus Wizard – An Important Person in Florida Citrus History

Posted by David R. Shipman, AMS Administrator in [Research and Science](#)

Feb 21, 2017

Pictured here with his pet rooster, March, Lue Gim Gong's work with citrus trees helped develop a frost-tolerant orange after a disastrous winter in Florida.



*"No one should live in this world for himself alone, but to do good for those who come after him."* These are the words that Lue Gim Gong lived by. When he was only 12 years old, Lue left his home and farmer parents in Canton, China and crossed the Pacific Ocean to America. He lived and worked in San Francisco until he was 16, and then moved to Massachusetts to take a job at the C.T. Sampson shoe factory.

At church, Lue met Fannie Burlingame, the daughter of a wealthy farmer and merchant. She immediately recognized his desire to learn and his natural talent with plants. He eventually came to live with her family and they helped him become an American citizen in 1877.

Along with his green thumb, Lue had a knack for storytelling and a way with animals. While his personality and desire to learn were larger than life, his body was frail and at some point in his youth he became very ill, possibly with tuberculosis. His condition was made worse by the cold New England climate, so Fannie suggested he move to DeLand, Florida, where she and her sister owned a house and orchard.

Working with William Dumville, Fannie's brother-in-law, Lue planted orange trees and other fruits, immersing himself in the world of horticulture.

In the winter of 1894-95, Florida saw some of the worst freezes in recorded history. Almost all of the citrus groves were lost—including the ones worked by Lue and Dumville. Lue's experiments in cross-pollination became focused on producing fruits that were more tolerant of cold weather.

Fannie passed away in 1903, leaving Lue the house and property in DeLand. Devastated by the loss of "Mother Fannie," Lue became a bit of an eccentric fixture in the small Florida community. His pet rooster, March, and two horses named Baby and Fannie were his main companions, but his work with plant varieties continued.

In 1911, he was recognized for successfully cross-pollinated a “Hart’s Late” Valencia orange with a “Mediterranean Sweet” to produce a new orange named the “Lue Gim Gong.” This sweet new variation, later found to be a nucellar seedling of the Valencia, ripened in the early fall and was much more resistant to the cold. It is sold under the Valencia name today.

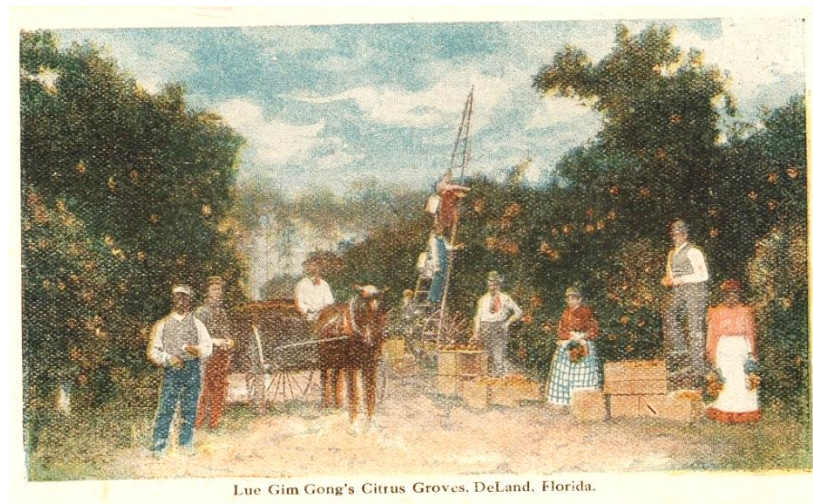
His achievement won the Silver Wilder Medal, awarded by the American Pomological Society—the first such award for a citrus fruit.

Lue also developed an apple that ripened a month earlier than other varieties, tomatoes that grew in clusters, and a peach that would ripen in late November. His continued efforts with citrus plants also produced varieties of grapefruits that grew singularly (instead of in clumps), a cold-tolerant grapefruit that was slower to drop and a “perfumed” variety that had a heavy fragrance.

Lue’s conviction to do lasting good changed the Florida citrus industry and broadened the seasonal range for many orchard-grown trees. While his life was lived simply and mostly outside of the limelight, he certainly did his best to create something good for the generations of farmers that came after him.

USDA’s [Agricultural Marketing Service](#) (AMS), celebrates the life of Lue Gim Gong and spirit of the words he lived by. From our [programs that support farmers and ranchers of all sizes](#) to our [role in bringing food to U.S. troops](#), we strive to do good for those around us and those who will come after us.

<https://www.usda.gov/media/blog/2012/05/16/citrus-wizard-florida>



Lue Gim Gong's Citrus Groves, DeLand, Florida.

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## Lucky Fruits for New Years

### ***January: Pineapples***

The Chinese word for pineapple is “ong-lai,” which means “fortune cones”. Pineapples are also popular symbols in feng shui as they symbolize prosperity and wealth.

### ***February: Oranges***

The round shape represents coins. The color represents gold in Chinese tradition. Oranges are also chalked with Vitamin C.

### ***March: Apples***

The Chinese word for apple is “ping,” which means “harmony”. There are several different varieties of apples to choose from so which one do you pick? If you are wanting good luck, choose red apples. If money is what you are after, display green ones. You also can't go wrong with having red AND green apples in your home.

### ***April: Grapes***

This fruit represents luxury as these were traditionally eaten by royalty. They are often the fruit of choice in the Philippines to display on New Year's Eve.

### ***May: Bananas***

Since this fruit comes in clusters, they symbolize unity. Their yellow color also stands for happiness.

### ***June: Mangos***

The sweetness of this fruit signifies strong family ties. Mangos are also very healthy and can easily be added to drinks or foods without overpowering them.

### ***July: Lemons***

The fragrance and essence of lemons is known to cleanse and remove negative vibes. The bright color of this fruit can add a pop of color to any room which makes them a great lucky fruit to display around your household.

### ***August: Watermelons***

This fruit symbolizes prosperity. Their many seeds stand for abundance.

### ***September: Papayas***

Similar to the orange, this fruit represents gold in Chinese tradition. In order to bring about the most luck, choose the roundest looking papayas that you can find.

### ***October: Lychees***

The round, red body of this fruit stands for happiness and good fortune. One of the interesting features about lychees is that when cut open, they have what looks to be a “dragon eye” in the middle of them.

### ***November: Avocados***

The unique green and purple colors of this fruit symbolize prosperity. They also make for a nutritious snack if you get hungry.

### ***December: Pomelos***

The bright red or pink pulp of the pomelo represents good health. The fruit has a sweet taste.

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### ⌘ Club Notes ⌘



**From the Seed Chairman:** To start the year off, there will be an exciting selection of seeds celebrating Mexican flavors including Zapotec tomato, Cream Guava, sour cucumber, tomatillo, jicama, tagetes, epazote, and of course peppers. There will also be selections of Passiflora seeds to complement our discussion on passion fruits this month including maypop, purple, flavicarpa, sweet and giant granadillas. Supplies are limited.

For recipes on using those **beautifully colored purple sweet potatoes, (purple yam, ube)**, go to the following web site to download a free digital copy of the recipe created by UF/IFAS Food Science and Human Nutrition Department.



<https://branding.ifas.ufl.edu/downloads/uploads/Extension%20Brochures/IFAS/Purple-Sweet-Potato-Recipe-Book-digital.pdf>

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](mailto:bdprovencher@tampabay.rr.com)  
Submissions for the next newsletter due by: **January 22nd**.

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### ⌘ 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:  
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***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.*

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