



# RFCI

June 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 Unity North Tampa Church,

19520 Holly Lane, Lutz, FL 33558

## ∞ Upcoming Programs and Events ∞



**June 11<sup>th</sup> – 2pm to 4pm – Mangoes and More!!!**

### **The Club's Annual Mango Tasting**

We are beyond excited for our annual mango tasting! Have you been wanting to grow your own mangoes, but don't know what variety to get? This meeting is for you! Try 25+ varieties of mangoes & other tropical fruits. This year the tasting is open to the public, so please invite your friends & family! If you have extra fruit that you grow, it doesn't have to be mangoes, bring it to the tasting. We are celebrating all fruits! Meeting is at Unity North Tampa Church, 19520 Holly Lane, Lutz, FL 33558

**We need volunteers to come in early to set up and cut the fruit. Please contact**

**[Tampa.Bay.RFCI@gmail.com](mailto:Tampa.Bay.RFCI@gmail.com)** to volunteer, and we will contact you with a time to arrive to help prepare for this fun event.

## ∞ Welcome New Members ∞

Sven Sierra

Ruskin

Michelle Day

Tampa

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

## Loquats

With Guest Speaker, Dell DeChant



Dell deChant, professor at the University of South Florida, who is also very involved with many urban farming endeavors, including the Florida Loquat Festival, spoke about this marvelous little fruit at May's meeting. The Florida Loquat Festival is the only event in the United States dedicated to celebrating, discovering, and learning about this wonderful fruit. There are trees for sale, educational presentations, preserves, and other delicious food items, tea, beer - yes - loquat beer, even poetry about loquats. The event is held in New Port Richey in March.

Did you know that:

Loquats (*ERIOPHYTUM JAPONICA*) are a member of the rose family.

They do well in tough urban environments where other trees may fail.

Trees are rarely available in nurseries, and the fruit rarely found at markets.

Loquats take extreme heat, and temperatures down to 10 degrees.

They are a fast-growing evergreen, up to 30' tall.

Trees from seed fruit in 3- 8 years.

Loquats flower in fall and the fruit is ready to harvest from late winter to early spring.

Bees love the flowers.

Fruit flavor ranges from tart to very sweet, resembling apricots, plums, or apples, or a unique flavor.

When fruit is ripe it is gold/orange. If the fruit is picked green, it will not ripen, and therefore not be edible.

Each fruit has 1 – 3 large seeds on average. Seeds have medicinal uses, but don't eat them.

Birds and other wildlife love them.

Loquat is sometimes called Japanese Plum.





Loquat trees are very easy to grow. Seed grown trees provide perfectly wonderful fruit. There are also grafted varieties available as well.

Loquats are self-fertile.

Varieties include:

Christmas – early ripening, large fruit, tangy apricot flavor.

Golden Nugget – large fruit, harvest in April

Yehuda – older, rarer variety, fruit tastes like golden delicious apple, Feb – April

Oliver – unique, fruity flavor

Bradenton – perfect for south Florida – less cold hardy

Sherry – mild flavor, like watermelon

Premier – the smallest tree, perfect for small spaces at a mere 6’

Champagne – sweet, spicy flavor – rare white flesh

Loquat trees are not readily found, but are available at the annual Loquat Festival.

2024 will be the 11<sup>th</sup> annual year of the festival. The event usually takes place on the third Saturday of the month. Plan on visiting to learn more about this wonderful fruit!

Location: Frances Ave Park – 6156 Louisiana Ave. – between Jackson & Van Buren Street

<https://www.facebook.com/FloridaLoquatFestivalNewPortRichey/>

For more information on growing loquats:

<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/MG050> Loquat

Growing in the Florida Home Landscape





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## ☞ What's Happening ☜

by Paul Zmoda

The biggest issue now is this severe drought – we have had only 1.3 inches of rain in the past month while the daily high temperature has inched higher and higher. Forget the brown grass – I'm concerned with keeping our valuable trees alive. Many fruits have aborted or are stunted. Some are doing fine despite the lack of precipitation. It's a good thing we have a well for irrigation, but some days the water flow slows down after 30 minutes of use.

I grafted many more persimmons, and unwrapped the earlier ones. Most are doing well. I had grafted three grapes onto a hybrid rootstock and planted one out. This European grape might get a boost in growth rate and maybe even fruit at an earlier age than normal due to the rootstock's vigor. I hope so.

Our Glenn mangoes are ripening and so are some grapes.

I purchased a Savannah cherry tree at a recent agriculture-oriented festival. It is related to Cherry of the Rio Grande. Tasty Guthrie plums are ripe now.



Guthrie plums – photo Paul Zmoda

New plantings: Grape and a lemon

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## Ambrosia Beetle – one to watch out for!

If you have seen these spiky looking sawdust strips on the trunks of your trees, especially younger trees, the news is not good. This is the unmistakable damage of the ambrosia beetle *Xyleborus glabratus*.

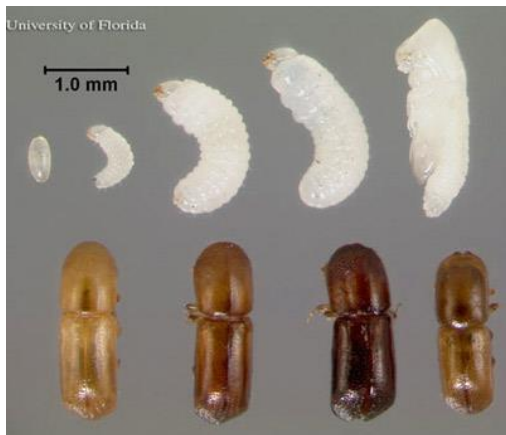
Ambrosia beetles are wood-degrading insects which live in nutritional symbiosis with ambrosia fungi. The beetle transmits the causal pathogen of laurel wilt disease among plants in the Laurel family.



Heavily infested trunk Image by DukeD

Wilt disease is still fairly new, but is considered a very high-risk invasive disease pest complex having potential equal to that of Dutch elm disease or chestnut blight (*Global Invasive Species Database 2010*). The economic impact is being felt in South Florida's avocado industry where there are approximately 6,600 acres in Miami-Dade County alone, with an economic impact of \$54 million to the regional economy. The avocado industry has already lost over 120,000 trees due to laurel wilt since the introduction of the disease to Miami-Dade County in 2011.

The ambrosia beetle measures only 2 to 3 millimeters in length, but it can completely devastate over 100 species of trees. The female of the species tunnels into trees and excavates chambers where she lays eggs and raises her offspring. Ambrosia beetle damage comes from the tunneling activities of the female insect and the ambrosia fungus that she introduces into the wood. They are rarely seen because of their small size and the fact that they spend most of their lives inside trees.



*Image left: Life cycle of the redbay ambrosia beetle, Xyleborus glabratus Eichhoff. Top row, left to right: egg; 1st, 2nd and 3rd instar larvae, pupa. Bottom row, left to right: the first three adults are females with progressively darkening exoskeletons, the final adult is a male. Photograph by Lyle J. Buss, University of Florida.*

The symptoms of an infestation and ambrosia beetle damage are unmistakable. As the female beetle tunnels, strands of boring dust, which look like toothpicks, extend from the tree. Young trees infested with the beetles usually die, but older trees may survive.

There is no insecticide for treating ambrosia beetles once they're inside a tree, and there is no cure for the fungus they bring to the tree. Therefore, ambrosia beetle control focuses on preventing the spread of the infestation.

The beetles attack trees under stress. The insects enter at sites with damaged bark. You will notice the strands of boring dust after a freeze, drought, flood, or other stressful event for the tree. These types of events activate the insects. They are considered "fungus farmers". Prevent stress as much as possible by watering the tree deeply during dry spells and keeping it on a schedule of regular fertilization as recommended for the species. Remove and destroy severely infested trees to prevent the infestation from spreading.



The first visible symptom of laurel wilt is the appearance of drooping leaves that turn off-color, and depending on the species affected, could be brownish, reddish or purplish. The wilted foliage typically occurs initially on one branch or just a section of the canopy. The foliage on the affected section of the tree eventually turns brown and remains on the tree for a year or more, though avocado trees may shed the brown leaves relatively soon after they wilt.

If laurel wilt is suspected, a section of the bark can be removed to check for black to brown discoloration in the sapwood. The discoloration will appear as streaks that run parallel to the grain of the wood. The longer the tree has been infected, the longer the streaks will be.

In advanced stages, and during dry weather, small strings of compacted sawdust may be found protruding from the boreholes along the trunk and limbs. They disintegrate easily, so an absence of them is not necessarily a good sign if the foliage is wilting in a portion of the canopy.

A beneficial practice for the tree would be to spray the foliage with a liquid seaweed spray. This is a simple way to provide trace elements and growth hormones directly to the foliage of the tree, for translocation throughout the entire canopy. Spraying weekly will provide the most benefit.

One last thing you can do to help boost your tree's defenses against the fungus would be to add aspirin to the liquid seaweed solution and spray them on the foliage together. Research found that spraying a plant's foliage with salicylic acid from aspirin results in a Systemic Acquired Resistance in the plant, which can help the plant protect itself from insects and diseases.

In the research,  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an aspirin was dissolved in water and sprayed on the foliage of plants. It may be easier to dissolve 3 chewable baby aspirin, in a small amount of hot water, add that to enough cold water to make a gallon, and add the liquid seaweed to spray them together.

To produce nutritious avocados, it is also beneficial to re-mineralize the soil with trace elements from a volcanic source, at least while the soil food web is getting established.

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## ∞ Club Notes ∞

Elections were conducted at the May meeting. The Board remains the same with Hillary Cosenza as President, Dylan Chadwell as Vice President, Susan McAveety as Treasurer, George Campani, Paul Zmoda, Christopher Ramirez, Paul Branesky, and Michelle James.

The Club is in need of a new secretary! If you would like to take notes at meetings, and other associated tasks, please see the Board members after the next general meeting to learn more.



I have 15 gallon pots, 10 gallon pots, trays and 4" pots, 2 metal shelf units and a couple other things that some members might want. I am willing to give away but would like a small plant if they can spare it for trade. I am not able to deliver these things. There is more than what is in the picture. Brenda 17495 1st ST. E, Redington Shores Fl  
[paynemail@juno.com](mailto:paynemail@juno.com)

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: **June 22nd**.



The Club's new t-shirts are available! Bright new colors and logo style make these such a fashion statement at the next Club event. They will be available for pre-order at the next meeting. Be sure to get yours!

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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: Tampa Bay RFCI, 12722 Prosser Rd., Dade City, FL 33525

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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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