



# RFCI

May 2024

## 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, 1:00 P.M.  
at the HCC Brandon Campus, Room 206/208  
10451 Nancy Watkins Dr., Tampa, FL 33619

### ∞ Upcoming Programs and Events ∞

**May 19<sup>th</sup> – \*\*\*\*Note the change in date so as not to interfere with Mother's Day. The Great Grafting Clinic** – One of the Club's most popular events, this annual tradition returns, and will show members various methods of grafting fruit trees.

Social hour - 1:00p-2:00p

Potluck - 2:00p - 2:30p

Introduction/Speaker - 2:30p-3:30p

Raffle/Closing: 3:30p-4:00p

Food Forest - 4:00p-5:00p



**Please see page 38 for information  
about our new meeting location.**

### ∞ Welcome New Members ∞

Scott Gunsauillus  
Kyle Kniffins  
Sean Billings  
Mesedu Avakhieva  
Eric Williams  
Jack Wilson

Milagros Vazquez  
Juliet Wilks  
Tammy & Rick Tenace  
Daniela Williams  
Vicky Lin  
Staci Goldstein

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

## Wango Mango!

With speaker Ian Campbell

Ian Campbell from Mango Men Homestead returned to the stage at the March meeting to speak about mango tree management, fruit production, and the Wango mango.

The Campbell family is filled with history when it comes to mangoes. Richard Campbell traveled the world bringing cuttings wrapped in paraffin back to Fairchild Gardens, where a large grove of 600+ trees, many Old World varieties, thrived. Eventually, he broke off from Fairchild to start his own grove. “We are a small sustainable specialty mango grove created by the Campbell family. Our story begins with Richard Campbell who made a career out of selecting and cultivating one of the largest and most coveted genetic collections of mangos in the world. We selected the best tasting/growing varieties (according to us) out of Richard Campbell's original collection and we grow and sell said mangos to the public on a small property of about 1 acre with over 280 trees and growing. We breed our own varieties of mangos and mango hybrids and use our own root stocks when we graft since we farm our trees differently than most as we keep them small (preferably dwarfed) and very heavily pruned.”



Photo: George Campani

Today the focus is on controlling the size of the trees, using heavy wood pruning for lush growth and increased production. Richard saw this method as the future of farming; maximum productivity in a smaller space.

Using dwarfing rootstocks, and starting to tip prune the trees early led to heavily branched out trees. Still today, it's the most consistent treatment they do for their trees. Some important points include:

- The trees are planted an arm's length apart.

- Mangoes are pollinated by flies, NOT bees. Bees don't like them.

- A fly bucket is used in the grove; a bucket containing fish guts. The strong odor will attract lots of flies to the grove.

- Don't let the tree set too many fruits, or it may not set well the following year.

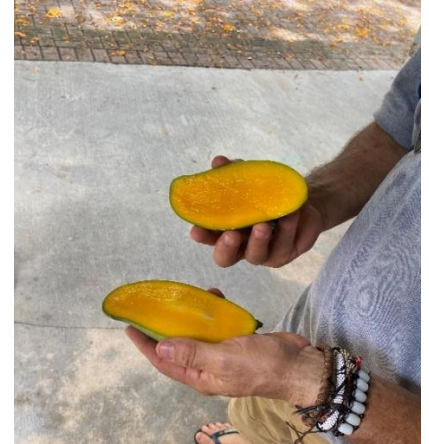
- Start tip pruning in November.

- Prop up branches as needed to support them, and prevent breakage. Keep the fruiting branches from dragging in the grass.

- Right after fruiting, tip the branches again, before new leaves are pushed out.

- In Florida, it's impossible to not have some anthracnose. Copper fungicide can help if it's a real problem, as can elemental sulphur. Timing of use is important. If wet weather is expected, especially an extended period of wet, that is when disease can appear.

Wangos! Interspecific breeding of mangoes with wild mangoes started in 2020, and the first fruits are just coming this year. There is lots of hints of a funky durian flavor, as well as coconut, and other tropical flavors, depending on the variety. Wild mango trees are extremely vigorous, with huge tree size, huge leaves, and it has proven tough to find a way to dwarf these trees to make them more manageable in the grove. The increased gene pool these wango crosses will provide is hoped to result in strong, hardy trees, and a resistance to disease, such as plagued the citrus industry. The prospects are quite exciting.



Wango mango fruits. Photos: Hillary Cosenza

For more details and instructional videos on mango tree management and care, follow the links below:

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

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCTE\\_rM\\_g5t7xaA2dQURBisQ](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCTE_rM_g5t7xaA2dQURBisQ)

[www.youtube.com/@mangomenhomestead994](http://www.youtube.com/@mangomenhomestead994)

## ☞ What's Happening ☛

by Paul Zmoda

I hope you are enjoying this wonderful spring weather as I am. So many plants are flowering now, with promises of good fruit to come. Mayhaws are holding a heavy crop now, but easily shake loose when ripe. These make an excellent jelly and grow well here, especially in wet soils.

I began pruning starfruit trees to be able to drive the lawn tractor underneath the branches. The olives are needing pruning badly – lots of dead and sparsely-leafed branches have to go.



Black Sapote flowers - Photo: Paul Zmoda

Most of the grafting is going well: all medlar scions are thriving on both loquat and pear rootstocks; some more are already flowering. Most persimmons are taking well. I received budwood of an un-named loquat to be parked on my established trees. All newly planted grapes are starting to take off. The *Vitis vinifera* from Portugal grafted on the Il Primo hybrid rootstock is showing flower buds in the first year. This hopefully cuts the wait time for fruit from four to five years down to one or two.



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## Scenes from the April Plant Sale – *photos George Campani*





### *A Vining Challenge!*

This year's change in construction for our display at the Fair gave a pleasant home garden look, and a layout challenge for decorating the latticed walls. On the large back wall was a dragon fruit plant with branching vines placed in an artistic arrangement.

This dragon fruit plant needed three individuals to bring it into the building, and to hold and attach the vines to the lattice wall without breaking them! Passion fruit vines were also attached to the side walls. It was worth the effort for a showy, trellised display.

Note, fruit was later attached to the vines of the dragon fruit and passion fruit for decoration and for educational purposes. The added dragon fruit led to many conversations with Fairgoers.

*Photo and write-up provided by George Campani*

### *A Winter free of Frost!*

*Denise Provencher*

This may not be exciting if you live in the southern parts of our membership area, but this past winter season was a first for us in the two decades that we have lived in the Zephyrhills/Dade City area. No frost – no freeze!!! Wow! No real cold, but still plenty of cool refreshing weather. There were only 187 chill hours for Dade City this past winter. The big question then is how would this weather change affect various fruiting trees.

Our starfruit tree was in bliss, providing an un-ending supply of very juicy, sweet fruits the entire winter, and still is providing. Normally, this is one of the trees that will suffer leaf and twig damage in real cold, and certainly there would be no fruit.

Avocadoes are loaded with immature fruits after very heavy flowering. Mangoes flowered very heavily, and young fruits are beginning to fill out. We cover ours in the event of freeze, but we didn't need to do that this year.

Loquats were so full of fruit, the trees were almost entirely yellow. "Christmas" finished its crop first, with fruit that is much larger than the regular loquats.

The stone fruits and apples were of most concern, as they do require some chilling, even if they are low chill varieties. The apples 'Anna', 'Golden Dorset', and 'Ein Shemer' all bloomed very heavily in January and February, but fruit set does appear to be less than last year, although the fruits are larger.

Low chill cherries bloomed, but no fruits have been noted. They are still rather iffy this far south in Florida, and perform better Gainesville north, but were worth experimenting with. Varieties include, Minnie Royal, Royal Lee, and Royal Crimson.

Florida Peaches and nectarines seemed to set adequate crops and are maturing nicely. Plums set a good crop. Mulberries are setting plenty of fruit. It was wonderful to harvest bananas all winter!

Other fruits such as figs, persimmons, guavas, olives, and others bloom and fruit later in the season, so we'll know more about the warmer winter affected them later.

If you aren't keeping a weather and garden diary, it's never too late to start. You can record important data such hi/low temperatures, rainfall, frost/freeze dates, and make notes on the performance of your plants. And don't forget to look at <http://agroclimate.org/tools/Chill-Hours-Calculator/> to check on local chill hours throughout the winter season. Happy growing!

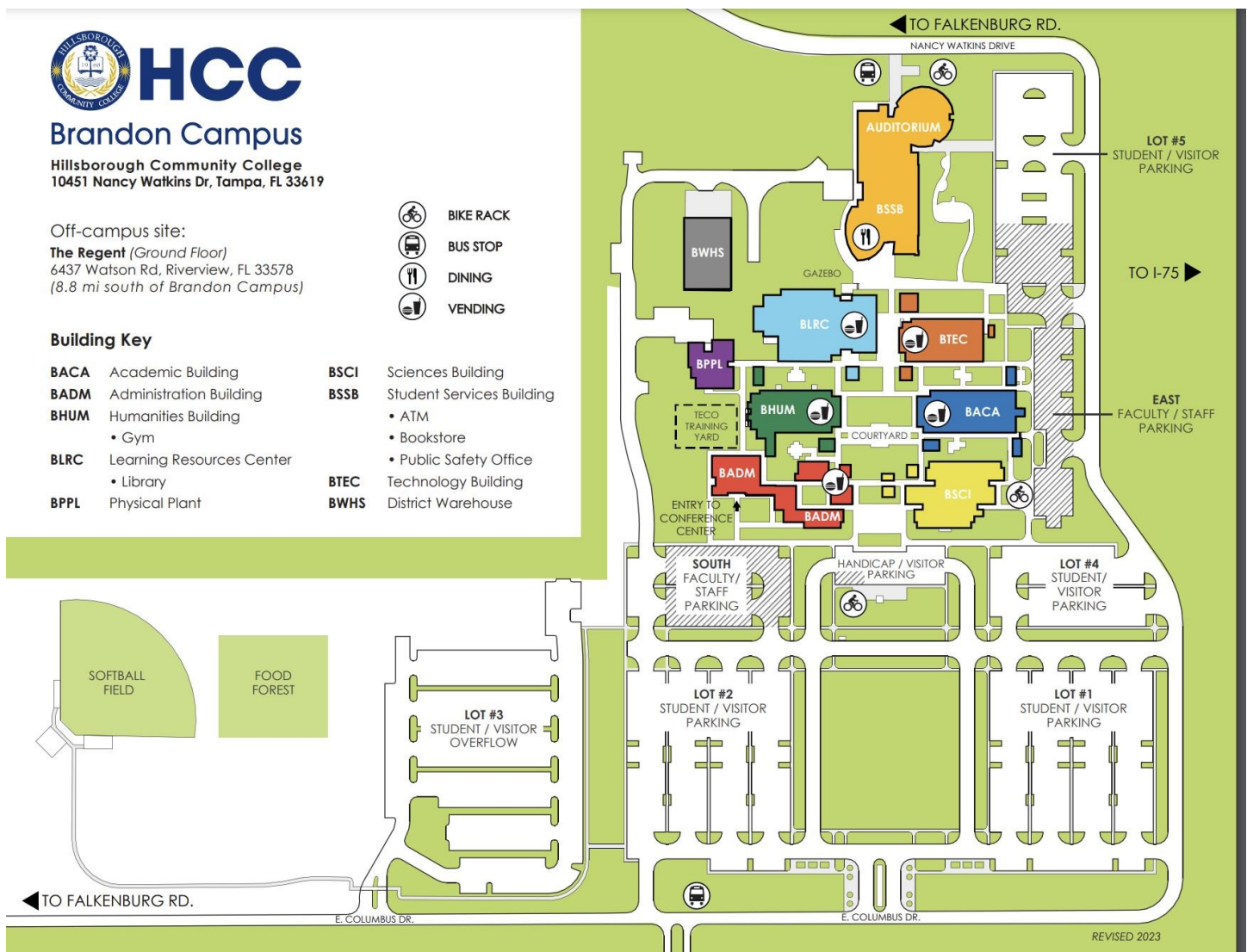


## ★★★★★ New Location for Meetings!!! ★★★★★

HCC Brandon Campus Map below:

The **red** Bldg is the **BADM Administration Bldg**. This is the building where the conference room we will be using is located. There is plenty of parking and marked handicap parking spaces available nearby. Room 206/208 is upstairs.

To get directions from your location use the following address: 10451 Nancy Watkins Dr. Tampa 33619  
HCC Brandon is very centrally located to all major roadways, and quite easy to access.  
Note the location of the food forest on the left near the softball field. Members will have the opportunity to develop and maintain this garden on the campus. More info at the next meeting!



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### ∞ Club Notes ∞

We value your feedback! Feel free to submit your thoughts and ideas on how the Club is doing, how it can be improved, what things you would like to see happen, and of course let us know where the Club is doing well. Use the QR code, or

Follow the link: <https://forms.gle/mm8AhGsDaBCTfehG7>



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### Always appreciated:

Member contributions to the newsletter! What 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 [Tampa.Bay.RFCI@gmail.com](mailto:Tampa.Bay.RFCI@gmail.com)  
Submissions for the next newsletter due by: **May 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:  
Tampa Bay RFCI, 12722 Prosser Rd., Dade City, FL 33525

**Both new and renewing members can also make a secure payment using Square. See the October posting link on our Facebook page, or the link on our Website.**

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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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