



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

December 2024

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

Meetings are held the second Sunday, 2:00 P.M.  
at the HCC Brandon Campus, Room 206/208  
10451 Nancy Watkins Dr., Tampa, FL 33619

œ Upcoming Programs and Events œ



*You're Invited !*

*Members' Holiday Party*  
*The Oaks at St. Mark's Event Venue*  
*13312 Cain Road*  
*Tampa, FL 33625*  
*Sunday, December 15, 2024*  
*1pm-5pm*



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

Join us in making this year's holiday party a delicious and memorable event! This year's holiday meal will be potluck style, so please sign up to bring your favorite dish. To make sure we have a balanced variety, choose a category below: Appetizers, Main Dishes, Side Dishes, Desserts or Drinks. Feel free to add a brief description of your dish, especially if it highlights unique or seasonal ingredients! Let's celebrate the season with great food and even better company! Thank you for contributing, and we can't wait to see what everyone brings!



<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0849A9A923A7F5C07-52783160-tbrfci>

## **No regular meeting this month.**

Instead of a gift exchange or raffle, plants will be awarded to winners for:

**Best Side Dish,**

**Best Desert,**

**Best Main Dish,**

**and of course – the Best Holiday Outfit.**

There may be a few surprise holiday games to play with members. *Oooooooooo!*



---

## ∞ Persimmons ∞

with speaker

Mark Bailey

At November's meeting, Mark Bailey, Sustainable Agriculture and Food systems agent for Marion County, spoke about persimmons in Florida. This wonderful autumn fruit is in full harvest at this time of the year, and there were numerous varieties for tasting after the meeting.

Florida has a native persimmon (*Diospyros Virginiana*), that can be found sometimes along roadways or in old homesteads. The fruit is very astringent until fully ripe, and then is sweet and delicious. The rootstock can also be used for grafting other varieties to.

Persimmons are categorized as:

Astringent, meaning the tannins in the unripe fruit will make your lips pucker from the dry, unpleasant taste; but when ripe are very sweet.

Non-astringent, meaning the fruit may be crisp and firm when unripe, but still be pleasantly sweet, and when ripe the fruit will be soft, even jelly-like and very sweet.

The Japanese persimmon (*Diospyros kaki*) was brought to the America in 1856 from Japan, and since then many varieties have been developed. Some of the well-known ones include:

Non-astringent types:

Early season - Izu

Mid-season - Ichikikei, Jiro, Matsumoto Wase

Late season - Fuyu

Astringent:

Saijo

Giambo

A third type of persimmon is (*Diospyros Nigra*), black sapote or chocolate pudding fruit. This is a tropical tree, and is not safely hardy below 28 degrees, although it will produce as a containerized tree.

Trees purchased as a specific variety will be grafted. These trees are smaller in height than the native type, making them easier to harvest.

Fruits are seedless.

Grafted varieties do not need another persimmon to get fruit, whereas the native persimmon is dioecious, meaning male and female reproductive parts are on separate trees. Plus, 90% of native persimmon trees are male!

Persimmons are easy to grow, being relatively free of pests and diseases.

The fruit lasts on the tree for a long time, and will last on the counter once picked for a long time as well.

Trees are attractive, especially when in full fruit, providing an ornamental value to the landscape.

Trees like full sun, well-draining soil, and a PH of around 6.

Use a slow-release fertilizer with minors 3 times per year.

Persimmon trees lose their leaves in winter, and sprout new leaves in spring after the tree has experienced sufficient warmth.

They grow slow, and are very hardy to cold.

Persimmons are also tap-rooted so they are very sturdy in wind.

Be sure to cut, or twist off the fruit. Do not pull it off! The whole branch can break.

For grafting, whip or chip grafts have been shown to work best, and grafting is best done when the trees are dormant.

Chilling is not required, but beneficial. Chilling can be increased with winter shade. Research has shown that planting not only persimmons, but **ANY** tree that benefits from chill hours, in a spot where there is shade on the tree in the winter can as much as double the chill hours and fruit production. Keeping the sun off the plant will keep it cooler.

Shade cloth 70 – 90% can also have this affect, or putting up a barrier to keep the sun off the tree during the winter months can also work. Great tip!!

### **Sources for trees:**

#### **Green Pointe Growers**

<https://askthegreengenie.com/>

#### **Chestnut Hill Farm**

<https://chestnuthilltreefarm.com/product-category/fruit-berries/persimmon-trees/>

#### **Just Fruits and Exotics**

<https://justfruitsandexotics.com/shop/?cat=Fruit%20Trees~Persimmon%20Trees>

### **UF/IFAS publications**

#### **Japanese Persimmon Cultural Practices in Florida**

<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/HS1389>

#### **Japanese Persimmon Cultivars in Florida**

<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/MG242>

---

---

## ∞ What's Happening ∞

by Paul Zmoda

It looks like cooler weather is on the way. Rainfall, however, may be sparse for a few months. We are still cleaning up after the hurricane's destruction. Two nice loquats had to be cut off at the ground level due to dying from too much rain. It took me over a week to remove five olive trees that were laid over from Milton's strong winds.

So much destruction in the wooded area out back – no paths remained passable. The once dark forest became sunlit and bright after a large percentage of it succumbed to the forces of a Cat2 eyewall.

My eight-year-old olive planting took a beating. I ended up removing five large trees, broken and prostrate.

Persimmon fruits are done and some bananas are available, thanks to now growing dwarf varieties.

Our 'Moreland' pecan tree is giving so many nuts this year. I repotted the true cherimoya and gave it a good pruning. In no time, it leafed out and started flowering. I've been hand-pollinating with my trusty little brush, and fruits are setting. The hurricanes couldn't ruin the sugar apple crop – even though one tree was laid flat on the ground with five fruits. All the varieties held their bounty until we came home to rescue and eat them.

New plantings: three medlars – grafted to loquat, two loquat seedlings, and lots of garden veggies such as mustards, radishes, carrots, broccolis, turnips, and more.



Sugar apples – photo - Paul Zmoda



**Note:** Beginning January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025, annual dues will rise to \$25.00. It has been a very long time since we raised our rate, but expenses are always rising, so eventually it becomes necessary. We hope you understand. Your dues supports all the wonderful programs, guest speakers, workshops, seed table, field trips, holiday party, and educational materials that the Rare Fruit Club brings you. Thank you for your support!

---



---

## Meeting photos by George Campani



Raffle Plants 🌱 Plants 🌱 Plants 🌱



The “Seed Specialists”! A great benefit for the Club Members.



Fresh Persimmons



Speaker Mark Bailey, and the sample table

---

---

### ∞ Club Notes ∞



#### **Time to start planning for next year's Citrus Celebration!!!!**

Next year's "Citrus Celebration" will be on Sunday, February 16, 2025 in the "Special Events Center Building" -- in the Florida State Fairgrounds. The "Citrus Celebration" is an annual production put on by our Club's volunteers. At the Florida Fair, we work preparing many varieties of citrus for tasting, we hand out information for growing citrus, and we have many educational displays. Since there is always a need for more volunteers, try joining us for this Annual Event!

Use this sign-up for volunteering at the Citrus Celebration,

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0849A9A923A7F5C07-53251299-tbrfci#/>

**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: **December 22nd.**

---

### ∞ 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.**

---



***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