



RFCI

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

February 2025

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

∞ Upcoming Programs and Events ∞

February 6 – 17 Florida State Fair and Citrus Celebration!!!!

The State Fair at the Florida State Fairgrounds runs from the 6th to the 17th this year. The Club needs volunteers to man our display and information booth during the Fair. The Citrus Celebration also needs volunteers, and that is on the 16th. Please use the QR codes or signup link to volunteer as these links help us to ensure time slots are filled, and all contact information is in one location should we need to contact anyone. Thank you!
NO REGULAR MEETING!

Please see page 13 for the QR codes and signup links.



∞ Welcome New Members ∞

Stephen Corry	Apollo Beach
Derek Godshall	St. Pete
Alex Keyhani	Tampa

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

No Pollinators, No Food: Why Honey Bees and What About the Native Bees?

Kenny Gil

At January's meeting, Club member and apiculturist Kenny Gil started the year off with a very enlightening talk about bees. Many people do not know that there are 4000 species of native bees in the US, 300+ in Florida alone. Most bee knowledge and familiarity focuses on the honey bee, brought over from Europe with the settlers.

The honey bee was in North America some 15 million years ago according to fossil records, but had been absent for a long period of time. Sweat bees, leaf cutters, mining, cuckoo, and bumble bees amongst many other species made up the majority of bee pollinators until the honey bee's re-introduction.

Today, there are approximately 2.5 million managed colonies in the US, with about 40 thousand bees per colony. The European honey bee is highly industrious, domesticable, and transportable, making them the top choice for bee pollinators. They are also big business. Such pollinators are responsible directly for about 1/3 of our diet.

There are many excellent choices for fruit trees that will attract bees. These include:

Bananas	Peaches	Jaboticaba	Citrus
Palms	Dragonfruit	Passionfruit	Blueberries
Loquat	Avocado	Jamaican Cherry	Lychee
Eugenias			

Flowering plants that should be considered for the pollinator garden include:

Wild Coffee	Goldenrod	Sweet Almond	Bottlebrush
Salvia	Maples		
Spanish Needle (<i>bidens alba</i>) the favorite flower of bees			

Find natives such as these at local native plant nurseries. Find more information from UF/IFAS "Gardening for Bees", and the Florida Native Plant Society's "Plant Selector".

Reducing mowing, and reducing use of pesticides and herbicides will also help bees out.

Wanna bee a bee keeper?

There is a plethora of information and resources about raising bees. See list below. It is a fun and interesting hobby, but be clear in your expectations. Follow the rules, register your hive, keep them treated for their health, and be prepared to wear the bee suit in hot weather!

If you would like to get started look for used equipment to start with if possible. Initial full hive setup can cost about \$300, \$100 for the suit, about \$175 for a starter kit with queen and eggs, etc, and another \$100 to \$200 for accessories and other necessities, such as a smoker. Be alert for the yellow-legged hornet, a threat to honeybees. They hover at the entrance of the hive, and grab unsuspecting bees, and consume them. The US Dept of Entomology wants those with victimized hives to send pictures so they track the hornets. The Hive Beetle is another pest to watch out for as they harbor many diseases.

Resources:

Tampa Bay Beekeepers Association

Pinellas Beekeepers Association

USF Beekeeper Class – offered regularly

UF Bee College – Gainesville – 2 day seminar

To reach Kenny Gil with any questions:

QueenoftheCastleBees@gmail.com

813-421-5656



Photo: George Campani

∞ What's Happening ∞

by Paul Zmoda

We sure got off to a frigid start to the new year. The temperature hit the upper thirties at dawn with some frost on the roof, but no harm to any pants. The large soursop tree is safely indoors, I bring in small seedlings as needed, and cover tomatoes and papaya just in case.

Some trees need chilling hours in order to bloom, so it appears that most areas will have no trouble attaining them. The only trees blooming at this time are loquats, mangoes, and white sapote.

More than half of our grapevines have been pruned. When I'm finished with them, I will start on fruit trees. Some of the larger trees, such as pecan and longan, have broken branches up high, thanks to two hurricanes. I have to stay in shape if I expect to climb and prune the canopies.

We are eating well from our winter garden. Mustards, raabs, collards, tomatoes, and radishes are non-stop. Onions and garlic are coming along. Tomato and pepper seeds have been started indoors, and a few rooted grape cuttings were potted up.

New planting: small flower pawpaw.



Mango flowers – photo Paul Zmoda

Volunteer Signup information for the State Fair and the Citrus Celebration

This 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. As we continue to need volunteers for this fun event, you can still sign-up using the QR code on the Club's Newsletter.

You enter the Fair's parking area from MLK. Then proceed to Gate #3 where you enter the Fair. The "Special Events Center Building" is by Gate #3. Volunteers can come in early (before the Fair opens) at this gate; most volunteers start at 8 AM; but we, also, need volunteers later.

If you have fruit, please bring it to the all members bring as much fruit available to the Citrus Celebration for tasting and the rare fruit display

See you in February!

Sign up here for helping at the Citrus Celebration on the 16th:

**Volunteers for the Citrus Celebration on February 16
in the Special Events Center Building**



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

Sign up here for helping at the Horticultural Display booth during the days of the Fair:

**Volunteers for the TB RFCI Horticultural Display from Feb 6-17
in the Florida Living Center Building**



<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0849A9A923A7F5C07-54214325-2025#/>

Cups Citrus Tour

Text and Photos by
George Campani



A Group of Tampa Bay Rare Fruit Club Board Members stopped by the Citrus Research and Education Center in Lake Alfred on December 18, 2024 and were treated to a field tour of the Research Center's CUPS (Citrus Under Protective Screening) Program. This research project was originally set-up to see if growing citrus under protective screening was feasible in the battle to protect citrus plants from the Asian Citrus Psyllid that carries the bacteria that causes greening or Huanglongbing (HLB). Greening can kill a citrus grove's financial future over a short period of time and eventually kills the trees.

Our "tour guide" was Laura Waldo (CUPS Field Research Scientist) and she gave a fun and educational tour. Not only was growing citrus sustainable under protective screening, but also, there were some benefits to growing citrus under protective screening. The seed count is often lower on some varieties of citrus, the fruit will often look cleaner, and the brix (sugar) can be higher-- as the citrus is not fighting greening.

During the tour we viewed an interesting trial planting that demonstrated nice looking Ray Ruby Grapefruit Trees grown on Cleopatra rootstock. Though smaller trees, they can produce a higher yielding crop (under protective screening) if the trees are planted much closer together. Again, all the plants were looking healthy and "not" fighting HLB.

There was the little known Kinnow Citrus that grows well with the added heat under the protective screening and produced a beautiful looking plant and nice tasting fruit.

To further cultivate our interest in fruit grown under the CUPS system we sampled the fruit of the W. Murcott Tangor, though normally seedy, the fruit was delicious tasting and seedless.

There were many interesting citrus hybrids being developed by the Research Center under the protective screenings. For example, there was a large grapefruit hybrid (the 914) that interested many in the group and they enjoyed tasting the fruit during the "Variety Display" after the field tour.

During Laura's extended tour, there was one Persian Lime plant with an interesting tidbit of information that amazed the group. It was started from a leaf cutting (yes, propagated from a leaf cutting) and once again, the plant looked healthy.

The tour was enjoyed by our group and we would like to thank Laura Waldo for a fun and enjoyable experience.



∞ Club Notes ∞

Watch the March newsletter for information on our new meeting location! The Club is growing, and we have found a larger location for our meetings in Tampa!

**The Oaks at St. Mark's Event Venue
13312 Cain Road
Tampa, FL 33625
More to come!**

March is closing in! Elections will occur at the March meeting. If you would like to be on the Board, come to the March meeting for more information.

We're planning a Fall plant sale at HCC – if you would like to sell plants, it's time to start planning and getting your plants ready.



Long time member Charles Novak has lots and lots of 1 gallon and three gallon pots for members. If you would like some free pots, please email him at charles.novak@gmail.com to set up a time to visit.

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 Submissions for the next newsletter due by: **February 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 \$25 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 \$25 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 make quick, 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
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