



# RFCI

March 2025

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

Meetings are held at The Oaks at St. Mark's Event  
Venue. 13312 Cain Road Tampa, FL 33625  
Check newsletter, website, or Facebook for date

<http://www.rarefruit.org>

[Tampa.Bay.RFCI@gmail.com](mailto:Tampa.Bay.RFCI@gmail.com)

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

### ⌘ Upcoming Programs and Events ⌘

**March 9, Passionfruit!** The Club's very own Paul Zmoda will discuss the Passifloraceae family with focus on the fruiting species, especially the ones we can grow in Florida. Paul has been raising fruits and vegetables for over 40 years on his five acres, and passionfruit is one of his specialties.

**This meeting will be at our new meeting location!** The Club is growing, and we have found a larger location for our meetings in Tampa! **See address above in the page header.**

**April 13, Jonathan Crane will be our speaker. NOTE:** The Oaks venue was unavailable for this date, so we will be meeting back at the **Unity North Tampa Church**, 19520 Holly Ln, Lutz, FL 33558 for this one meeting.

### ⌘ Welcome New Members ⌘

Ed Jackson Tampa

### **THANK YOU TO THOSE THAT CAME!!!**

On January 26, 2025, members of the Tampa Bay Rare Fruit Council enjoyed an unforgettable field trip to Fat Beet Farm in Tampa. This unique farm emphasizes sustainability and showcases innovative practices in organic farming. During the tour, we explored their farm operations and learned about their dedication to sustainable food systems. The trip was capped off with a delightful meal at their farm-to-table café, where fresh ingredients were turned into a memorable dining experience.

Missed the trip or want to relive the experience? Watch segments of our visit on YouTube:

<https://youtu.be/eNXApOeWWSI>.

We also want to remind members to stay connected with us through our **Tampa Bay Rare Fruit Council MEMBERS ONLY Facebook Group!** This is the best way to stay updated on events, share photos, ask questions, and connect with other members. If you haven't joined yet, visit

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/TampaBayRareFruitCouncilMembersOnly> and request access today.

KC Gonzalez - Tampa Bay Rare Fruit Council, Secretary

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

Pictures from the Citrus Tasting at the State Fair  
Photos by George Campani







---

## *The Citrus Celebration – write up by George Campani*

The Tampa Rare Fruit Council has continued its long history once again this year with the production of its annual event: the Citrus Celebration in the “Special Events Center Building” on Sunday, February 16, 2025 at the Florida State Fair. It was a nice sunny morning when we began preparing for our 25<sup>th</sup> (missed one during the pandemic) Citrus Celebration at the Florida State Fair. The Club’s Citrus Celebration started in 1998 through 2001 in the Botanical Garden at USF, before moving to The State Fair in the year 2002.

There continues to be challenges producing this Annual Event, the biggest being citrus has become much harder to get in the last few years because of Citrus Greening (a bacterial disease spread by the Asian Citrus Psyllid). We have not lost some, but most of our suppliers over the years from Citrus Greening and we must find new suppliers each year and each year, there are fewer suppliers out there. Good luck next year!

This year Paul Branesky lost his orange supplier for making orange juice. However, somehow, he was inspired to search for another source. This was a difficult task, with the industry fighting Citrus Greening and this year’s hurricanes reducing the citrus harvest, and yes, there was less citrus to find; but invariably, through Paul’s perseverance he found a new supplier; John Stephens and his Citrus Packing House and John donated a Bin of Vernia Oranges for juice making and a carton of Vernia Oranges for tasting. Thank you, John! Paul made a great tasting orange juice with the sweet and smooth tasting Vernia Oranges.

The many hard-working volunteers once again cut oranges for tasting, and placed out trays. Other volunteers manned the Display Tables with its many citrus varieties on display, they answered questions, and had conversations on their growing experience. There they handed out literature on growing citrus donated by the U.F. Citrus Research and Education Center in Lake Alfred.

Hillary Cosenza had many varieties of citrus trees for sale for the Fairgoers who might be interested in trying to grow a well-known plant in Florida.

Since our Club promotes growing many varieties of semi-tropical plants, there was passion fruit juice, soursop fruit juice, mango fruit juice, pina colada fruit juice, and guava fruit juice by the cup to be purchased by the Fairgoers. Great job Dylan Chadwell and KC Gonzalez!

Miss Florida Citrus Alana Scheuerer was there to meet and greet the volunteers, the fairgoers and help promote the Citrus Celebration. Alana helped highlight the Event for us! Thank You! A special thanks to Tom Schaefer for coordinating Alana Scheuerer, Miss Florida Citrus, for the Citrus Celebration!

### *Special thanks to our suppliers that donated fruit:*

Thank you, John Stephens, and the Beck Brothers Citrus (new supplier)  
Vernia Orange 1 bin and Vernia Orange 1 carton

Thank you, Egan Farms Packing House (new supplier) - Sweet Ruby Grapefruit 2 cartons and White Grapefruit 2 cartons

Thank you, Dundee Packing House - Valencia Orange 1 carton and Pink Grapefruit 1 carton

Citrus Research and Education Center

Sugar Belle, Duncan Grape fruit, Temple tangor, Minneola tangelo, Honey Murcott,  
Ray Ruby Grapefruit, 914 Grapefruit Hybrid (not yet named)

Special thanks to our hard-working volunteers: without them this event could not take place:

Dylan Chadwell, Yuko Topping, Yoshimi Tamura, KC Gonzalez, Scott Petersen, Brenda Osmena, Thelma Mix, Rochan Premraj, Maya Premraj, Ray Geeck, Gina Abed, Adam Abed, Jerlyn Spicer, Dottie Latimer, Bob Latimer, Suzanne Baron, Bill Baron, Mehdi Rakhshani, Sharon Barker, Steve Barker, Al Spicer, Alan Susi, Paul Branesky, MaryAnne Branesky, Ugur Soylu, Michelle James, Robert Godwin, Kathy Godwin, Paul Zmoda, Patty Quinby, Alice Stein, Carmen Goodwin,

Tina Aguire, Tom Schaefer, Verna Dickey, Hillary Cosenza, Jon Cosenza, Julene Clarke, Susan McAveety, Chis Ramirez, Ko Chang, Anacario Rivera III, Debbie Campani, Raffina Dindial, Kenny Gil. I apologize to those I have missed.

Thank you to our Club President, Dylan Chadwell, for his hard work and a great job.  
Another successful event and well attended!



## ∞ What's Happening ∞

by Paul Zmoda

Mostly what's happening lately is pruning and weeding. All grapes are done, and they are starting to wake up. Avocado trees need to be topped at twelve to fifteen feet. A few are done and need to be sprayed for lacebugs and thrips.

I finished burning a seventh brush pile of hurricane debris. The ashes are spread around to provide potassium for the yard plants and vegetable gardens.

Tomatoes are ripening at a fast pace. More carrots were planted, and the first pole beans of the season are coming up.

Starfruit are ripening, as the last of the persimmons are about done. The black sapote is giving up the biggest ever crop. The fruit is mildly sweet, dark brown, and pasty in texture. I guess it is an acquired taste for some, but I like it.

I planted sugar apple and more passionfruit seeds. All the grape trellises have been refurbished and I installed three more vines.



Black sapote – photo Paul Zmoda





## More Field Trips!!!!!!!

**Sunday, March 2nd:** Join us for a special tour of Paul Zmoda's garden! This **\$5 fundraiser field trip** helps support larger future trips.

- **Time:** 10 AM – 12 PM
- **Meeting Location:** Due to limited parking, we will carpool from Publix Super Market at Winthrop Town Center (11109 Winthrop Market St, Riverview, FL 33578). Please arrive by 9:30 AM.
- **Details:** KC will reach out to participating members closer to the trip with additional information. Contact KC: [Tampa.Bay.RFCI@gmail.com](mailto:Tampa.Bay.RFCI@gmail.com)

**Saturday, March 29th:** Join us for an exciting Limo Coach Bus tour of **three incredible food forests in Orlando!** From 7 AM to 7 PM, we'll visit the tropical paradises of **Gilbert Rivera, Kevin Williams, and Andy Baylis**, spending about **1.5 hours at each location**. Here is the link for Square to reserve your spaces: <https://checkout.square.site/merchant/3FWD4EGDQ00YC/checkout/LC3UKZ2JU4FA4FDOMIG4ZHNY>



- **Cost:** \$55 (limited to 20 members)
- **Pick-up Locations:**

- 7:00 AM – Publix Super Market at Carillon Town Center (120 Carillon Pkwy, St. Petersburg)
- 7:45-8:00 AM – HCC Brandon Food Forest

• **Lunch:** Please bring a **packed lunch**, as we will eat on the bus between stops to maximize our time.

Any questions about the trips contact KC at: [Tampa.Bay.RFCI@gmail.com](mailto:Tampa.Bay.RFCI@gmail.com)

---

### ∞ Club Notes ∞

**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.**

**The Manatee Rare Fruit Council's 36th Annual Fruit Tree and Plant Sale** - Saturday, March 22, 2025, 9 AM - 2 PM Same venue as last year: Premier Sports Campus, 5895 Post Blvd, Lakewood Ranch, FL 34211

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](mailto: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](mailto:Tampa.Bay.RFCI@gmail.com) Submissions for the next newsletter due by: **March 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  
12722 Prosser Rd.  
Dade City, FL 33525